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LATE PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

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SERMON LXXXVII.

CONSEQUENCES OF REGENERATION.—PERSEVERANCE.

PROVERBS iv. 18.—*The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

IN the preceding discourse I observed that the text naturally teaches us the following doctrines :

I. *That the holiness of the Christian is a beautiful object ;*

II. *That it increases as he advances in life ;*

III. *That it continues to the end.*

The two first of these doctrines I have already examined. I will now proceed to a consideration of the third.

As this doctrine has been, and still is, vigorously disputed; it will be necessary to make it the subject of a particular examination. In doing this I shall first adduce several arguments as a direct proof of the doctrine; and shall then answer the principal objections.

1st. *It is irrational to suppose, that God would leave a work, towards which so much has been done, unaccomplished.*

To effectuate the salvation of such as believe in Christ, God has sent him, to become incarnate, to live a life of humiliation and suffering, and to die upon the cross. He has raised him from the dead, exalted him at his own right hand, and constituted him, at once, an Intercessor for his children, and the Head over all things unto the Church. He has also sent the Spirit of grace, to complete, by his almighty energy, this work of infinite mercy, in sanctifying, enlightening, and quickening, the soul, and conducting it to heaven. Now, let me ask, Is it not in the nature of the case incredible, that JEHOVAH should commence, and carry on, this work, with such an amazing apparatus of labour and splendour, and leave it unfinished? Is it not incredible, that an Omniscient and Omnipotent Being should form a purpose of this nature; should discover in this wonderful manner, that he had it so much at heart; and should yet suffer himself to be frustrated in the end? Who can reconcile this supposition with the perfections of God?

2dly. *The continuance of saints in holiness follows irresistibly from their Election.*

It is unnecessary for the purposes of this discourse, that I should inquire into the metaphysical nature of Election. It is sufficient for my design, that saints are declared, abundantly throughout the Scriptures, to *be chosen of God.* Thus, Rev. xvii. 14, the Angel declares to *John* concerning the followers of the Lamb, that *they*

are called, chosen, and faithful. Thus, Luke xviii. 7, Christ, speaking of his followers, says, *And shall not God avenge his own elect*, or chosen? Thus *St. Paul*, Rom. viii. 33, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* Thus *St. Peter*, in his first Epistle, chap. 2d, and verse 9th, *Ye are a chosen generation:* and thus, throughout the Scriptures.

It is to be remembered, that this appellation is given to Christians *universally.* In the passages, already quoted, it is plain, that the names *elect* and *chosen*, which, you know, are the same in the Greek, are equivalent to *Saints* or *Christians;* and accordingly are addressed to them without distinction. The same observation is, with the same truth, applicable to the numerous passages of Scripture, in which this language is adopted.

Of all these persons it is often said, that they were *chosen from the beginning;* or *from before the foundation of the world.* Thus *St. Paul*, 2 Thess. ii. 13, addressing the members of that Church, says, *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.* Thus also, Eph. i. 4, the same Apostle, addressing the Christians at *Ephesus*, says, *According as he hath chosen us in him;* that is, Christ; *before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame, before him in love; Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.* From these passages, and from many others of similar import, it is clear, that Christians are *chosen by God unto salvation from the beginning;* or *from before the foundation of the world.* But can it be supposed, that a purpose of God, thus formed, will be frustrated? As this is declared of Christians, *as such;* it is evident, that it is alike applicable to *all* Christians. If, therefore, any Christian ceases to be holy; this purpose of God, solemnly adopted, and declared, will in one instance be frustrated; and in every instance, in which this event takes place. Thus far, then, God will be finally disappointed of one end of his government, really proposed by him, and expressly announced to the Universe. Who can believe this concerning the Creator?

3dly. *If Christians continue not in holiness unto the end, the Intercession of Christ will be frustrated.*

In John xvii. 20, Christ, after having prayed for his Apostles, says, verse 20th, *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee: that they also may be one in us.* In this petition, Christ prays the Father, that *all* those, who should believe on him through the word of the Apostles; that is, all Christians; may become partakers of that divine union, which, in the heavens, is the most perfect created resemblance of the ineffable union of the Father and the Son. If, then, any Christian fails of sharing in this union, the prayer of Christ, here recited, will not be answered.

4thly. *If the holiness of Christians does not continue unto the end, the joy of Heaven over their conversion is groundless, and in vain.*

Our Saviour informs us, that *there is joy over one*, that is, over every, *sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance.* No error exists in heaven. All the perceptions of its inhabitants are accordant with truth: all their emotions are founded in truth. The joy, excited there by the continuance of ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance, (that is, persons perfectly just) in their holiness, is a joy, founded on the everlasting holiness of these persons, and the everlasting happiness, by which it is inseparably attended. The joy, excited by the repentance of a sinner, is, however, greater than even this. As this is unconditionally asserted by Christ; it is unnecessary for me, in the present case, to inquire into the reasons of the fact. But a joy, excited by the repentance of a sinner, whose everlasting holiness, and consequent everlasting happiness, is uncertain; nay, who may never be holy, nor happy, at all, beyond the first and feeblest efforts and enjoyments of a Christian in his infantine state; cannot be founded in truth, nor dictated by wisdom. Nay, it cannot be accordant with common sense. Upon the plan here adopted, the object, on which this joy is founded, although a penitent to-day, may be a reprobate to-morrow; may thus finally lose both his holiness and his happiness; and, becoming a more guilty, may of course become a more miserable wretch, than if he had never repented. In this case, there would be, upon the whole, no foundation for joy at all; and the inhabitants of heaven would, in many instances, instead of rejoicing rationally, and on solid grounds, be merely tantalized by the expectation of good, which they were never to realize.

What, in this case, would be the conduct of rational men in the present world? We have instances enough of their conduct, in cases substantially of a similar nature, to furnish us with an unerring answer to this question. They would, as in all cases of such uncertainty they actually do, indulge a timorous, trembling hope, that the case might end well; that the penitent might persevere, and finally become safe. They would experience a degree of satisfaction, that this first step had been taken, because it was indispensable to the rest, and would feel a continual, anxious suspense, lest others, equally indispensable, should not follow. What wise and good men in this world would feel on such an occasion, wiser and better men in the world to come must of necessity also feel; and feel much more intensely; because they comprehend the subject in a manner so much clearer, juster, and more perfect. Of course their suspense, their anxiety, must exist in a far higher degree. Such a suspense, such an anxiety, must, one would think, embitter even the happiness of heaven.

Frustrated expectations of great good, also, are, in this world, sources of extreme sorrow. The same fact must in that benevolent world be a source of the same sorrow. But how often, according to this scheme, must such expectations be there frustrated! Can this be reconcilable with a state of unmingled happiness?

5thly. *That the holiness of Christians should not continue to the end, is inconsistent with many Scriptural declarations.*

We know, saith *St. John*, that we *have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.* 1 John iii. 14. It is impossible for any person to know, that he has passed from death unto life, unless he has actually thus passed. But *St. John* declares, that himself, and such other Christians as love the brethren, have this knowledge; or, perhaps more conformably with the Apostle's real design, all Christians *know this, who know*, that they love the brethren. The love of the brethren is certain, absolute proof, that all those, in whom it exists, have passed from death unto life. And this proof exists, whether perceived by him, who is the subject of this love, or not perceived. But every Christian loves the brethren; and that, from the moment in which he becomes a Christian. Every Christian, therefore, has actually passed from death unto life. This, however, cannot be true, unless every Christian perseveres in holiness unto the end. Every Christian does, therefore, persevere.

Being confident, says *St. Paul, of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.* The word here rendered *perform*, signifies *to finish*, or *complete*. St. Paul was confident, therefore, that the Spirit of God, who had begun a good work, viz. the work of sanctification, in the *Philippian* Christians, would continue to complete it by various steps, until it was brought to perfection. But *St. Paul*, under the influence of inspiration, could not mistake concerning this subject. His confidence was founded in truth. The work, begun in the *Philippian* Christians, *was completed.* Of course it will be completed in all other Christians.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, says our Saviour, *He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is* (hath) *passed from death unto life.* John v. 24. In this passage it is declared, that *he that heareth the word of Christ, and believeth on him, by whom he was sent, has passed from death unto life.* What is meant by this phrase is also decisively explained, when it is said, "Every such person hath everlasting life;" and when it is further said, "He shall not come into condemnation." But every Christian, *when he becomes a Christian*, hears the words of Christ, and believes on him that sent him. Therefore every Christian has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but has already passed from death unto life.

Declarations of the same import abound in the Scriptures. It cannot be necessary to multiply quotations any farther. If these are not believed, none will be believed.

6thly. *The doctrine, against which I contend, is inconsistent with many Scriptural promises.*

Such a promise is contained in the passage last recited. *He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, shall not come into condemnation.*

Another is contained in the following words, John vi. 37, *Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.* Every Christian *has come to Christ*, in the very sense of this passage. Should he, then, be rejected afterward, he would be as really cast out, as if rejected at first; and the promise would not be performed.

Another example of the same nature is found in Mark xvi. 16, *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.* Every Christian has believed: every Christian will therefore be saved.

Another is found in John x. 27, 28, *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.*

Another in the 9th verse of the same chapter: *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.*

All these are promises, uttered by Christ himself; and it will not be denied, that he understood the import of his own promise, nor that he will faithfully perform it to the uttermost.

Finally; *St. Paul* has declared his views concerning this subject in a manner, which one would expect to terminate the controversy. *Moreover*, says this Apostle, *whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* This is both a declaration, and a promise; and in both respects is unconditional and universal. In the most express language it asserts, that every one, who is effectually called, is justified, and will in the end be glorified also. But every Christian is thus called.

I shall now proceed to consider the principal objections against the perseverance of Christians.

1st. *It is objected, that this doctrine is inconsistent with Free agency.*

This objection, as to its real import, I have had occasion to consider in several preceding discourses. If the answers, made to i then, were just and sufficient; they must admit of a satisfactory application to this subject. The drift of the objection in every case is against the doctrine, that God can create a free agent, who shall yet be a holy being. If he can create such an agent, and make him holy from the beginning; he can, undoubtedly, with equal ease, and equal consistency, render such an agent holy after he is created. But it cannot be Scripturally denied, that our first parents, or the angels, were created holy; nor that the man, Jesus

Christ, was created holy. Nor can it be denied, that all these were in the fullest sense free agents. The very acknowledgment, that they were holy, is an acknowledgment, that they were free agents; for holiness is an attribute of free agents only. It is certain then, that God can render such agents holy, at any time after they are created, without infringing at all the freedom of their agency. In other words, he can regenerate them; can sanctify them afterwards, at successive periods; and can, of course, continually increase their holiness to the end of their lives.

Further; Angels, and glorified Saints, will persevere in holiness throughout eternity; and their perseverance is rendered absolutely certain by the unchangeable promise of God. Yet neither this perseverance, nor the certainty of it, will at all diminish the freedom of their agency. The perseverance of Saints in this world may, therefore, exist to the end of life, and may be absolutely certain, without any diminution of the freedom of their agency.

2dly. *It is alleged, that the Scriptures promise eternal life to Christians conditionally; and that this is inconsistent with the supposition, that every Christian will certainly persevere in holiness.* For example; *He, that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved:* and again; *For we are made partakers with Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.*

There are many passages of this nature in the New Testament. As the import of them all is exactly the same, it will be unnecessary to quote any more. Their universal tenour, whether given in the form of promises, cautions, exhortations, or commands, is this: that eternal life will not be allotted to any of mankind, except those who continue in obedience unto the end. Hence it is argued, that a discrimination is here intentionally made between such Christians as do, and such as do not, thus continue in their obedience. Otherwise, it is observed, the condition would be useless, and without any foundation in fact.

To this I answer, first, that a conditional promise, collateral to an absolute one, can never affect, much less make void, the absolute promise. The promises, which I have recited, of eternal life to every Christian, are all absolute; as are also many others, of the same nature. They cannot, therefore, be made void by these conditional ones.

Secondly; it is still true, that none, but those who endure to the end, will be saved; and equally true, that every Christian will endure to the end.

It is elsewhere said in the Scriptures, that, if we *do not believe, we shall be damned;* that, *if we do not repent, we shall perish;* that *if we do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be anathema;* that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord;* that *he who hateth his brother abideth in death;* and that *without love we are nothing.* From these passages it might with the same force be concluded, that some persons believe, who do not repent; that some repent,

who are not holy; and that some are holy, who yet hate their brethren; and that, thus, a discrimination was intended to be made between believing Christians and penitent ones, and between both these and such as are holy. The truth is: every Christian does all these things. These several descriptions were given, partly to show us the whole nature of Christianity; partly to teach us *all our duty;* partly to show us, that all of it is indispensable; and partly to furnish us with useful and necessary evidence of our Christian character.

At the same time, all these conditional promises, and exhortations, are, and were intended to be, powerful means of the very perseverance, which is the principal subject of them. We are not constrained, or forced, to persevere; nor should we, on the other hand, persevere, were we wholly left to ourselves. Our perseverance is owing to two great causes: the influence of the Spirit of God on our hearts; and the various means furnished in the word, ordinances, and providence, of God, accompanied with the divine blessing upon the use of them. Among these means, the very condition, here suggested in so many impressive forms, is of high importance; and has contributed to the perseverance of Christians in holiness ever since the Scriptures were published. Although, therefore, all Christians actually thus persevere; yet it is not improbable, that without the aid of those passages of Scripture, here alluded to, multitudes might have fallen away. Christians have no other satisfactory knowledge of their Christianity, except their continuance in obedience. The earnest desire of possessing this knowledge on the one hand, and the fear of being found destitute of the Christian character on the other, cannot but serve as powerful motives, (motives too powerful, in my view, to be safely omitted in the Scriptural system) to produce in the Christian perseverance in holiness.

3dly. *It is objected, that this doctrine naturally contributes to lessen the diligence of the Christian in his duty.*

For an answer to this objection I must refer you to the observations, made in a former discourse on the same Objection to the doctrine of *Justification by faith.* In that discourse, the objection was applied to the doctrine now under consideration; and, if I mistake not, was satisfactorily obviated.

4thly. *It is objected, that several passages of Scripture teach the contrary doctrine.*

Among these is Heb. ii. 4—8, *For it is impossible for those, who were once enlightened; and have tasted of the heavenly gift; and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost; and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth, which drinketh in the rain that cometh upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth*

blessing from God; but that, which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected; and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.

It will be unnecessary for me to determine, here, who are the persons, meant by the Apostle in this passage. *He himself has decided, that they are not Christians.* Their character is fully expressed in the 8th verse, under the image of *the earth, which beareth thorns and briers; while that of Christians is expressed in the 7th verse, under the image of the earth, which bringeth forth herbs, meet for them by whom it is dressed.* These are here studiously contrasted. The character of the former is, therefore, exhibited by the Apostle as a direct contrast to that of Christians; who, it is to be remembered, are represented every where in the Scriptures as bringing forth good fruit. This passage, then, teaches nothing, opposed to the doctrine which I am endeavouring to support.

Secondly. *It is not asserted by the Apostle, that those, of whom he speaks, ever actually fall away.* The case is stated only in the form of a supposition, and he declares only, that, should they fall away, there is no possibility of renewing them unto repentance. Whether such persons do in fact fall away is, therefore, left uncertain.

Should it be thought, that the expressions in this passage amount to a description of Christianity; and that, therefore, Christians are meant in it: I answer; that neither of the expressions taken separately, nor all of them together, involve any necessary description of Christianity. It is true, that Christians sustain all these characteristics, except two; viz. *partaking of the Holy Ghost, and the powers of the world to come:* μελλοντος αιωνος, *the future age*, that is, the period of the Christian dispensation, thus denominated. These phrases indicate the miraculous powers, possessed by many Christians, when this passage was written, but never belonging to Christians as such. They, therefore, denote no part of Christianity. *Judas* possessed these characteristics. The remaining expressions are all indefinite; and as truly applicable to men, who, still continuing to be sinners, have enjoyed peculiar Christian advantages, as they can be to Christians. The whole drift of this passage, therefore, even when construed most favourably for those whom I oppose, is only ambiguously in favour of their doctrine; and is, in my view, decided against them by the Apostle himself. But it cannot be rationally believed, that a doctrine of this importance would, in opposition to so many clear, decisive declarations, have been left to expressions merely ambiguous.

Another passage, pleaded for the same purpose, is the declaration of Christ, John xvii. 12, *Those whom thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.* To discover the true meaning of this passage, we need only recur to other declarations of the same glorious Person. *Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias; but unto none of them was Elias*

sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. The widow of *Sarepta* is here, by the very same phraseology, included among *the widows of Israel;* as *Judas* was included among those *that were given to Christ.* Yet we know, and this passage declares, that she was not an *Israelitish*, but a *Sidonian* widow: and we know, equally well, that *Judas* was never given to Christ, as a Christian.

Again; *There were many lepers in Israel, in the time of Elisæus the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, saving Naaman*, the *Syrian. Naaman*, the *Syrian*, was not an *Israelitish* leper; though, in the first apparent meaning of the passage, mentioned as such. *Judas* was not given to Christ, although apparently mentioned as thus given. The whole meaning of this phrase would be completely expressed thus: *Those whom thou gavest me have I kept; and none of them is lost: but the son of perdition is lost.*

That *Judas* was never given to Christ we know from his whole history, and the repeated declarations of his Master. This passage, therefore, has not even a remote reference to the subject in debate.

Another passage of the same nature is that, 1 Tim. i. 19, *Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith, have made shipwreck.* The meaning of this passage may be easily learned from a correct translation. *Holding fast faith*, faithfulness or fidelity, *and a good conscience; which some*, that is, some teachers, *having cast away, concerning the faith*, την πιστιν, that is, *the doctrines of the Gospel, have made shipwreck.*

Generally, it may be observed, that the doctrine, against which I contend, is not supported in a single, unequivocal declaration of the Scriptures. I know of none, in which it is asserted in terms so favourable to it, as those which I have considered. Whatever is said concerning the apostacy of any Christian professors is decisively explained by *St. John. They went out from us, but they were not of us: for, if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.*

REMARKS.

1st. *The faithfulness of God is highly conspicuous in the truths, which have been now discussed.*

Christians provoke God daily; and awaken his anger against themselves more and more continually. By every sin, they persuade him, if I may be allowed the expression, to desert them, and to give them up to themselves. Still he preserves them from destruction. He has promised them life. He has established *his covenant* with them *for an everlasting covenant;* and it *shall never be forgotten.* On his Immutability their safety stands immoveable. In this manner is it exhibited by himself. *For I*, saith he, *am* JEHOVAH: *I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.* This attribute is the seal, the certainty, of every promise: and

sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or one tittle of that, which is promised, *shall fail.*

2dly. *From these observations we learn, that the promises of the Gospel are absolutely necessary for the hope, and support, of Christians.*

Christians, in their very best estate, possess such a character, as to say the most, furnishes a very feeble and distant hope of their perseverance in holiness, and their final success in obtaining salvation. In better language, if left to themselves, there is no rational hope, that they would ever arrive at the kingdom of heaven. If God did not preserve them, they would fall daily, certainly, and finally. Without the promises of God, prone as Christians are to backslide, they would feel no confidence in their own success; but would sink into despondency and despair. To preserve them from this despondency, and the ruin which would result from it, God has filled his Word with promises, which yield solid and sufficient support, consolation, hope, and joy. On these they rest safely, and cannot be moved.

3dly. *We here learn, that the Christian life is a life far removed from gloom.*

Many persons hearing often of the self-denial, repentance, and mortification of sin, connected with Christianity, have supposed a life of Religion to be only gloomy and discouraging; and have thus dreaded it, as destitute of all present enjoyment. In this opinion they have been confirmed by the sad countenances, demure behaviour, and cheerless lives, of some who have professed themselves Christians. All this, however, is remote from the true character of Religion. Real Christianity furnishes the fairest and most abundant enjoyment. It is delightful in itself; and, when not the immediate object of persecution, finds every where comforts, friends, and blessings. In God the Christian finds a sure, an ever-present, an everlasting friend; in Christ, a Saviour from sin and sorrow; in the divine promises, an indefeasible inheritance of unceasing and eternal good.

Let none, therefore, particularly let not those who are young, and who are easily deterred from approaching that, which wears a forbidding aspect, be hindered from becoming religious by any apprehended gloominess in Religion, or any sorrowful deportment of those, who profess to be Christians. Christianity is but another name for joy. It can spread a smile even over this melancholy world, and lend delightful consolation to suffering and to sorrow. All its dictates, all its emotions, all its views, are cheerful, serene, and supporting. Here it is safe; hereafter it will triumph. Sin only is misery. Sinners, in this world, have a thousand sufferings, of which the good man is ignorant; and, in the world to come, will lie down in eternal sorrow.

SERMON LXXXVIII.

EVIDENCES OF REGENERATION.—WHAT ARE NOT EVIDENCES.

2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 5.—*Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates?*

HAVING, in a long series of discourses, considered the doctrine of Regeneration, its Antecedents, Attendants, and Consequents; I shall now proceed to another interesting subject of theology; viz. *the Evidences of Regeneration.*

In the text, the Apostle commands the *Corinthian* Christians *to examine, and prove themselves;* and states the purpose of this examination to be to determine *whether they were in the faith.* He then inquires of them, *Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates?* in the original, *except ye be* αδοκιμοι, *unapproved;* unable to endure the trial of such an examination. From this passage of Scripture it is plain, that it was the duty of the *Corinthians to examine themselves concerning their Christian character;* and that *this examination was to be pursued by them so thoroughly, as to prove, so far as might be, whether they were, or were not, in the faith; whether Christ did, or did not, dwell in them by his Holy Spirit.*

That, which was the duty of the *Corinthians*, is the duty of all other Christians. That, which is the duty of all Christians, it is the duty of every Minister to aid them in performing. To unfold *the Evidences of Religion in the heart* is, therefore, at times, the duty of every Minister; and, to learn them, that of every Christian.

In attempting to perform this duty at the present time, I shall endeavour to point out,

I. *Some of the Imaginary Evidences of Religion;*

II. *Some of its Real Evidences;* and

III. *Some of the Difficulties, which attend the application of the Real Evidences of Religion to ourselves.*

I. *I shall endeavour to point out some of the Imaginary Evidences of Religion.*

By *Imaginary Evidences* I intend *those, which are sometimes supposed to be proofs of its existence, but have this character through mistake only:* evidences, which may be, and often are, found in the hearts, and lives, both of the saint and the sinner: things, on which it is dangerous to rely, because they do not evince, in any degree, either a holy or an unholy character. It will not be expected, that I should enter into a minute, and detailed, account of

a subject, which has occupied formal treatises, and filled volumes. Considerations of particular importance can alone find a place in such a system of discourses. To them, therefore, I shall confine myself; and even these I must necessarily discuss in a summary manner. With these preliminary remarks, I observe,

1st. *That nothing in the Time, Place, Manner, or other circumstances of a supposed conversion, furnishes, ordinarily, any solid evidence, that it is, or is not, real.*

It is not uncommon for persons, and for Christians among others, to dwell, both in their thoughts and conversation, on these subjects; and to believe, that they furnish them with comforting proofs of their piety. Some persons rest not a little on their consciousness of *the time*, at which they believe themselves to have turned to God. So confident are they with regard to this subject, that they boldly appeal to it in their conversation with others, as evidence of their regeneration. "So many years since," one of them will say, "my heart closed with Christ. Christ was discovered to my soul. The arm of Mercy laid hold on me. I was stopped in the career of iniquity. I received totally new views of divine things." Much other language, of a similar nature, is used by them; all of which rests, ultimately, on their knowledge of the time, at which they suppose themselves to have become the subjects of the renewing grace of God.

There is reason to believe, derived however from other sources, that these apprehensions may sometimes be founded in truth; in other instances, there is abundant proof, that they are founded in falsehood. But that, which may easily be either false or true, as in the present case it plainly may, can never safely be made the ground of reliance; especially in a concern of such moment.

Other persons appeal with the same confidence to *the manner, and circumstances*, of their supposed conversion, as evidences of its reality. Thus one recites with much reliance the strong convictions of sin, under which he was distressed for a length of time; the deep sense, which he had of deserving the anger and punishment of God; his disposition readily to acknowledge the justice of the divine law in condemning him, and of the divine government in punishing him; his full belief, that he was among the worst of sinners; and the state of despair, to which he was brought under the apprehensions of his guilt. Of all these things it may be observed, that, although convictions of sin, generally of the nature here referred to, always precede regeneration; yet, in whatever form or degree they exist, they are not regeneration. They cannot, therefore, be proofs of regeneration. He, who has them, in whatever manner he has them, will, if he proceed no farther, be still *in the gall of bitterness.*

But the same person, perhaps, goes on farther; and declares, that, while he was in this situation of distress, when he was ready to give himself up for lost, God discovered himself to him as a

reconciled God; and filled his mind with new, sudden, and unspeakable joy; that he had a strong and delightful sense of the divine mercy in Jesus Christ, of the wonderful compassion of Christ, in consenting to die for sinners, in being willing to accept of sinners, and particularly in being willing to accept of so great a sinner as himself: that he found his heart going forth in love to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to the word and ordinances of God, and to the Church of Christ: and that this state of mind was new to him; being constituted of emotions, which he never felt before. On these things, therefore, he reposes, as supporting evidences, that he is a Christian.

All this is, in my own view, a just account of what really takes place in the conversion of multitudes; and, did it exist in no other case, would undoubtedly furnish the very evidence, here relied on without any sufficient warrant. The defect in this scheme lies in the fact, that these very emotions are experienced by multitudes, who are not Christians. That a person, who has been the subject of extreme distress under convictions of sin, and the fear of perdition, should, whenever he begins to hope, that his sins are forgiven, and his soul secured from destruction, experience lively emotions of joy, is to be expected, as a thing of course: and *that*, whether his hopes are Evangelical, or false. All men must rejoice in their deliverance from destruction, whether truly, or erroneously, believed by them; and all men, who have had a distressing sense of their guilt and danger, will, under a sense of such a deliverance, experience intense emotions of joy. All men also, who really believe, that God is become their friend, will love him. All will love the word of God, who consider it as speaking peace and salvation to themselves. This joy, and this love, it is evident, are merely natural; and are felt, of course, by every mistaking professor of Religion. Love to God, and to divine things, is *a delight in the nature of these objects*, independently of any personal benefit, to which we feel entitled from them.

Another person places confidence in the *greatness of the effects*, which his sense of sin, and his hope of forgiveness, produced both on his body and mind. He will inform you, with plain consolation to himself, that his distressing apprehensions of his guilt sunk him in the dust, and caused him to cry out involuntarily; deprived him of his strength, and for a time perhaps of the clear exercise of his Reason; caused him to swoon; and almost terminated his life. Much the same effects, he will also observe, were produced in him by his consequent discoveries of the divine mercy. These overwhelmed him with transport; as his convictions did with agony. The extraordinary nature, and especially the extraordinary degree, of these emotions, furnishes this man with the most consolatory proof, that he is a child of God.

On this I shall only observe, that as these emotions may be, and often are, excited by natural, as well as Evangelical, causes; so, when thus excited, they may exist in any supposable degree. The agonies, and the transports, the agitations of body, and of mind, prove, indeed, the *intensity* of the feelings experienced; but they do not in the least degree exhibit either their *nature*, or their *cause;* and cannot, therefore, be safely relied on, as evidences of Religion.

A third person will tell you, that, while he was in a state of absolute carelessness, and going on headlong in sin, *he was suddenly alarmed concerning his guilt and danger by a passage of Scripture, which came to his mind in a moment; without any thought, or contrivance of his own;* and perhaps that, *after he had long wearied himself to find an escape from the wrath of God, another text of Scripture, also without any contrivance of his own, came as suddenly to his mind, conveying to him bright views of the divine mercy and glorious promises of salvation.* The reliance of this man is placed, especially, on the fact, *that these texts came to his mind without any effort, on his part, either to remember, or to search after them.* He therefore, concludes, that they were communicated to him, directly by the Spirit of God; and that they conveyed to him a direct, personal promise of eternal life. This is mere delusion. Passages of Scripture, and those just such as are here referred to, come often, suddenly, and without any labour of theirs, to the minds of multitudes, who are not Christians: and God is no more immediately concerned in bringing them to the mind, in this case, than when we read them in the Bible, or hear them from the desk. What God speaks in the Bible he always speaks, and speaks to *us;* but he addresses nothing to *us*, when we *remember*, any more than when we *read*, or *hear*, his words. If we rely on the true import of what he says; we rely with perfect safety: but, if we place any importance on the *mode*, in which at any time that, which is said, comes to our minds; we deceive ourselves. The whole of our recollection, in these cases, is a merely natural process; and is the result of that association of ideas, by which memory is chiefly governed, and which brings to our remembrance, *in the very same manner*, thousands of other things, as well as these texts of Scripture; of which however, as being of little importance to us, we take no notice.

Other persons depend much on *the regularity of the process* with which their distresses and consolations have existed; and *in the conformity of them to such a scheme, and history, of these things*, as they have found in books, or received from the mouth of acknowledged and eminent Christians. In the Sermon on the Antecedents of Regeneration, I observed, that *this work is in its process almost endlessly various.* But, in whatever manner it exist, the manner itself is of no consequence. Should we have exactly the same succession of distresses and consolations, experienced by ever so

many of the most distinguished saints, and yet our affections, instead of being Evangelical, be merely natural; the order of their existence could never prove, that we were Christians: for we should still be sinners. The *nature* of these affections, and not *the order*, is the great concern of all our self-examination.

2dly. *Zeal in the cause of Religion is no evidence, that we are, or are not, Christians.*

Men, we all know, are capable of exercising zeal in any case, in proportion to the degree of interest, which they feel in that case. We also know, that there is *a zeal, which is not according to knowledge*. All persons, naturally ardent, become zealous about every thing, in which they are once engaged; and, especially, when they are opposed. *Christians* are zealous in the cause of *Religion: Deists* and *Atheists*, in the cause of *Infidelity: Jews*, in that of *Judaism: Heathen*, in that of *Idolatry*. The *Ephesians* were zealous for the worship of the great Goddess *Diana: St. Paul* and his companions, for that of the true God: *the Anabaptists* at *Munster*, for the wild reveries taught by their leaders: and thus concerning innumerable others. Nothing is more evident, than that zeal was not, in the most of these cases, any proof of piety in those, by whom it was exercised.

As *zeal itself*, so *the degree in which it exists*, is no proof of vital religion. There have been multitudes of persons, *whose zeal has prompted them to court persecution*. It is not uncommon for members of small and despised sects to believe, that *the sufferance of persecution is a decisive characteristic of the true Church of God;* and to solicit it, as decisive evidence, that they themselves are members of this Church. With these views, they sedulously construe all the kinds, and degrees, of opposition, with which they meet, into persecution. In this manner they regard the sober argumentation, with which their opinions are refuted; the most dispassionate exposures of their folly and their faults; the most just operations of law, directed either against their crimes, or to the preservation of the rights of others; nay, even that abstinence from communion with them in their worship, and that refusal to further their designs, which they, on their own part, claim as indefeasible rights of man. Such persons ought to remember, that all, or nearly all, classes of Christians, even those whom they most oppose, nay, that Infidels, and Atheists, have been persecuted, and that the modern *Jews* have been more persecuted, than any other sect, party, or people, now in existence. The sufferance or persecution, therefore, is no proof, that we belong to the true Church. Still more ought they to remember, that *St. Paul* hath said, *Though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.*

3dly. *No Exactness in performing the External duties of Religion furnishes any evidence, that we are, or are not, Christians.*

Few persons have been more exact in this respect, than the ancient *Pharisees*. Yet Christ has testified of them, that they were *a generation of vipers*. Under the Christian dispensation, great multitudes of the *Roman Catholics*, notoriously profligate in many parts of their conduct, have, in various periods of Popery, been remarkably punctilious in the performance of these duties. That, which was no evidence of Christianity in *them*, cannot be evidence of Christianity in *ourselves*.

Many persons are exact in this conduct from the influence of education, and example; many, from habit; many, from the desire of religious distinction; many, because they think this conduct a proof of their piety, and are uneasy without such proof; many, because they think themselves, in this way only, in the safe path to salvation; and many, from other selfish reasons. In all these things, considered by themselves, there is no religion. Of course, the conduct, to which they give birth, cannot be evidential of religion.

4thly. *No Exactness in performing those, which are frequently called Moral duties, furnishes any evidence of this nature.*

Multitudes of Mankind place great confidence in their careful performance of *these* external duties, as being evidential of their Evangelical character; just as other multitudes do in *those* mentioned under the preceding head; and with no better foundation.

Justice, truth, and kindness, in their various branches, and operations, are so important, and useful, to mankind, that we all readily agree in giving them high distinction in the scale of moral characteristics. Those, who practise them uniformly, and extensively, are universally considered as benefactors to the world, and as invested with peculiar amiableness, and worth. Those, who violate them, on the other hand, are, from the mischiefs which they produce, regarded as enemies, and nuisances, to the human race. At the same time, a high degree of importance is given to these duties in the Scriptures. They are greatly insisted on in the Gospel; inculcated in many forms of instruction; commended in the most forcible language; and encouraged by most interesting promises. The violation of them is condemned, and threatened, in the most pungent terms, and under the most glowing images.

It cannot be surprising, that, influenced by these considerations, parents should make these duties a prime part of their instructions, and precepts, to their children. But when we remember, that the practice of them has in all ages, and in all civilized countries, been considered as equally, and as indispensably, necessary to a fair reputation, and to success in the common business of life; we shall readily suppose, that these must be among the first things imbibed by the early mind, from parental superintendence, and must hold a peculiar importance in all the future thoughts of the man.

Thus taught, and thus imbibed, we should naturally expect to see them practised, during the progress of life, as extensively as can consist with the imperfect character of human beings. When thus

practised, and especially when eminently practised, we cannot wonder to find those, whose lives they adorn, regarded as persons of real virtue and excellence. What less can be expected? These are the very actions, towards our fellow-creatures, required by God himself; and dictated by Evangelical virtue; a part of the very fruits, by which the Christian character is to be known. Why is not he, who exhibits them, a Christian? Oftentimes, also, they appear with high advantage in the conduct of persons, distinguished by natural sweetness of disposition, peculiar decency of character, amiableness of life, and dignity or gracefulness of manners; and thus become delightful objects to the eye, and excite the warmest commendations of the tongue. It is not strange therefore, that they should have gained a high and established reputation; and should be extensively regarded as unequivocal proofs of an excellent character.

What others so generally attribute to them we not unnaturally accord with, whenever our own case is concerned: and, finding, that we are believed by others to be Christians, on account of our good works of this nature, readily believe ourselves to possess the character. We are esteemed, loved, and commended, by those around us; and cannot easily believe, that the worth, which they attribute to us, is all imaginary.

Still, such a performance of these duties furnishes no proof, that we are Christians. *For*, in the first place, *they may be, and often are, all performed from the very motives, mentioned under the last head, as being frequently the sources of exactness in the external duties of Religion.* Secondly, *they are often performed by men, who violate, extensively, or grossly neglect, the duties of piety, and temperance, and who, therefore, are certainly not Christians.* Thirdly, *they appear to have been all performed with uncommon exactness by the Young man, who came to Christ, to inquire what good thing he should do, to have eternal life.* Yet, *he lacked one thing;* and that was, *the one thing needful.*

5thly. *No degrees of sorrow or comfort, of fear or hope, experienced by any person about his religious concerns, at seasons, succeeding the time of his supposed conversion, furnish any evidence of this nature.*

Sorrow springs from many sources, besides a sense of our sins; and from such a sense it may be derived, and yet not be *the sorrow, which is after a godly sort.* We may easily, and greatly, sorrow for our sins, because we consider them as exposing us to the anger of God, and to everlasting ruin. Our comforts, also, may flow from other sources, beside those which are Evangelical. Some persons derive great consolation, and even exquisite joy, from a belief, and *that* whether well or ill founded, of their acceptance with God: some, from the apprehension that they are eminent Christians: some, from the unexpected influx of religious thoughts, and passages of Scripture, coming suddenly into their

minds: some, from what they esteem peculiar tokens of divine goodness to them; tokens, which they regard as proofs of the peculiar love and favour of God: some, from what they term peculiar discoveries of the glory of God and the excellency of the Redeemer, and of the joys of the blessed in heaven. All these they consider as immediately communicated by God to themselves, because they are his favourites among mankind. There are also other states of mind, in which consolations are experienced from other sources: consolations, which may exist in high degrees, but which are too numerous to be mentioned at the present time.

What is true of the sorrows, and comforts, excited by religious considerations, is substantially true of the kindred emotions of fear and hope. These can also arise both from true and false apprehensions; and can be either merely natural, or wholly Evangelical, or of a mixed nature. As they actually exist in the minds of men, they are, to say the least, often undistinguished, as to their real nature, by those, in whom they exist; and are, I believe, many times, in a great measure undistinguishable. Their existence is so transient, they are frequently mingled with so many other views and emotions, and the eye of the mind is often so engaged by the objects, which give birth to them, that it becomes extremely difficult to fasten upon their true character.

6thly. *No evidence of our Sanctification is furnished by our own Confidence.*

The truth of this declaration may be easily seen in the fact, that multitudes feel the utmost confidence, that they are Christians, who afterwards prove, by their conduct, their entire destitution of Christianity. All Enthusiasts usually confide with undoubting assurance in the reality of their own religion; and generally pity, and often despise, men of a humbler and better spirit; because they do not enjoy such peculiar discoveries, such delightful exercises of devotion, such bright hopes and heavenly anticipations of future glory, as themselves. The *Pharisee* boldly said, *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, or even as this publican.* Yet he was a worse man than the publican. A collection of the *Pharisees* said to Christ, *Are we blind also?*

I propose hereafter to consider, at some length, what is commonly called *the Faith of Assurance.* It will be sufficient to observe, at the present time, that I believe some men to be really and Evangelically thus assured. If this be admitted, as it undoubtedly will be by the great body of Christians, it follows of course, that confidence in our good estate is no proof, that we are not Christians. A man may confide, with sufficient evidence: he may also confide without it. It is plain, therefore, that his confidence, considered by itself, furnishes no proof, that it is well or ill founded.

I cannot, however, do justice to my own views, nor, as I believe, to the subject, without observing here, that, in ordinary cases, I entertain a better opinion of the modest, doubting, fearful professor, than of the bold and assured one. The life of the former, as it seems to me, is, commonly at least, more watchful; more careful; more self-condemning; more scrupulous concerning the commission of sin, and the omission of duty; more indicative of dependence on God; more inclined to *esteem others better than himself;* more declaratory of the spirit of *little children.* The spirit of the latter, even when he is admitted to be a Christian, appears to me to be often fraught, in an unhappy degree, with self-exaltation; with censoriousness, as well as contempt, of those who differ from him; with uncharitableness; with peremptoriness of opinion; and with an unwarrantable assurance of the rectitude of whatever he believes, says, or does. These, certainly, are not favourable specimens of any character. I would be far from ultimately condemning the profession of all those, in whom these things are more or less visible; yet I assert without hesitation, that their *light* would *shine* more clearly *before men,* were it not obscured by these clouds.

It is not *the degree* of confidence, but the *source whence it is derived, and the objects on which it rests,* by which its nature and import are to be determined. It may exist in the highest degree, without any religion; and religion may exist in very high degress at least, without any confidence.

7thly. *The belief of others, that we are Christians, furnishes no proof of our Christianity.*

All persons, who make a profession of religion, and many who do not, whose lives at the same time are exemplary, scrupulous, and unblameable, are by most charitable persons believed to be Christians. Some of these, however, beyond any reasonable doubt, are not Christians. Some we know to have lived in this manner, and to have sustained this character, both in ancient and modern times, without a pretension to vital religion. *Judas* was believed by his fellow-apostles, for a length of time, and not improbably without a single doubt, to be a true follower of Christ. *Hymenæus,* and *Philetus,* appear to have sustained the same character; and, apparently with as little foundation. All these were believed to be Christians *by Apostles;* inspired men; of singular understanding in subjects of this nature. Yet *these* men were deceived. No words are necessary to prove, that *we,* and *all others,* are liable to deception in similar cases. If the belief of *Peter* and *Paul,* hat *the objects of their charity,* in the cases specified, were Christians, was no evidence of *their* Christianity; then the belief of others, that *we* are Christians, is no evidence of *our* Christianity.

REMARKS.

From these observations we learn,

1st. *That we ought to exercise the utmost care and caution in examining the evidences of our Religion.*

How many professors of Christianity have considered the things which I have specified, as decisive proofs, that themselves were good men! Yet, if I mistake not, it has been clearly shown that all of them, united, furnish no solid evidence of this fact. *We* are just as liable to be deceived as *others;* and, unless peculiarly guarded, by the very same means. Others have rested their hopes of salvation on these things, as proofs of their religious character, and have been deceived. If *we* rest on them, we shall be deceived also: for we may possess all these things, and yet not be Christians. In a case of this moment, nothing ought voluntarily to be left at hazard. We are bound by our own supreme interest, as well as our duty to God, to fulfil the command of the text; to *examine, and to prove, ourselves, whether we be in the faith*: and in doing this, to make use of the best means in our power; to listen, with as much care as possible, on those things which the Scriptures have made tests of a religious character; and earnestly to pray to God, that we may not be deceived, either by ourselves, or by any others.

2dly. *From the same source we learn, also, the impropriety, and folly, of making these things the foundation of our judgment concerning the religious character of others.*

Whenever we determine, that others are, or are not, Christians, because they exhibit these as evidences of their Christianity; we are plainly liable to gross error concerning this subject. All these things may be truly testified concerning himself *by a Christian;* and with equal truth by *a person destitute of Christianity.* They are, therefore, no proofs of his religion, or irreligion.

Still, a great multitude of professing Christians, many of whom, I doubt not, are really Christians; and all, or nearly all, enthusiastic professors; make these very things, or the want of them, the foundations of their favourable, or unfavourable, opinions of the religious character of others. They resort to them, as to an acknowledged and Scriptural standard, which they do not expect to find disputed; and to question which would not improbably be regarded by them as a proof of irreligion.

What is still more unhappy; among various classes of Christians in this country, these very things; particularly those, mentioned under the first, second, and fifth heads of this discourse; are, if I am not misinformed, not unfrequently made the objects of a public examination of candidates for admission to Christian communion, and the foundations of a public judgment concerning their religious character. To be able to remember the time, when convictions of sin began, with their attendant distresses, and the time, when

they were followed by hopes, consolations, and joys; to have had these occasioned by the sudden, uncontrived, and unexpected influx of certain passages of Scripture into the mind; especially, if, according to a pre-established and acknowledged scheme of Regeneration among themselves, these things have taken place in a certain order of succession; still more especially, if the sorrows and consolations have risen very high; and, most of all, if they are succeeded by distinguished zeal about things pertaining to Religion; are boldly pronounced ample evidence of the candidate's piety. In this manner, there is reason to fear, multitudes are miserably led astray, both by being induced *beforehand* to labour, that these things may be truly said of themselves; and by settling down in a state of security on this false foundation *afterwards*.

Nor is the case less unhappy, when persons rest their hopes on their exactness in performing the external duties of Religion and Morality. Yet vast numbers of mankind repose themselves on these, as on a bed of down; and feel satisfied, that God will not finally condemn persons, who have laboured so much in his service. All of them will, however, find in the end, that to such as have done all this, and nothing more, *one thing is lacking:* viz. an interest in Christ: a thing, without which they cannot be saved.

3dly. *We see the danger of being strongly confident in the piety of ourselves or others.*

All, or nearly all, such confidence, so far as I have observed, has been derived from these supposed evidences of Religion; any part, or the whole, of which may be possessed by men totally destitute of Christianity. It is a fatal mark on them all, that the Scriptures have no where alleged them as proofs of religion. As they are not Scriptural proofs, they cannot be sound. To trust in them is to trust in a nullity. Accordingly, those who give the fairest proofs of Christianity in their life and conversation, never make these things the foundation of their hope; and are very rarely found to be strongly confident of their acceptance with God.

To pronounce boldly, that others are Christians, is, in many cases at least, equally hazardous. There are many persons, however, who roundly declare others, of whose life they have had little or no knowledge, to be Christians; and others not to be Christians, whose conduct and conversation give them at least as fair, and often fairer claims to this character. Nay, they will peremptorily make these assertions concerning Ministers of the Gospel; and pronounce some to be sanctified, and others unsanctified, from a sermon or a prayer; or even from the tones of voice, with which they are uttered. *Judge not*, saith our Saviour, *that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. Who art thou*, saith *St. Paul, that judgest another man's servant? To his own*

Master he standeth, or falleth. It is sufficient, to show the impropriety and rashness of these unwarrantable decisions, that they are founded on no Scriptural or solid evidence. They are generally built on the very things, exploded in this discourse, or others, of still less importance; all of which, united, go not a single step towards proving a religious, or an irreligious character.

SERMON LXXXIX.

EVIDENCES OF REGENERATION.—WHAT ARE REAL EVIDENCES.

2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 5.—*Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates?*

IN the last discourse, I attempted to point out *several things which furnish no real evidence of Regeneration, although they have been supposed to furnish it by multitudes in the Christian world.* I now propose to mention *several other things, which actually furnish such evidence.*

By all who believe the doctrine of Regeneration, as formerly taught in these discourses, it must be admitted, that the disposition communicated when this work is accomplished in us, is *new;* and something, which before did not exist in the soul. If it were the mere increase, or some other modification, of the former disposition, man could not be said *to be born again; to be created anew; to be a new creature; to be renewed in the spirit of his mind.* It could not be said by *St. Paul* concerning persons, who were the subjects of Regeneration, that *old things were passed away in them, and* that *all things had become new.*

It must further be acknowledged, that this new disposition is, in its nature, opposite to that, which before existed in the mind. The former disposition is *Sin;* condemned, and punished, by the law of God: the new disposition is *Holiness;* required, and rewarded, by the same law. The former disposition is hateful in the sight of God: the new one lovely, and *of great price.*

The former disposition is frequently, and justly, styled *Selfishness;* as being perpetually employed in subordinating the interests of any, and all, others to the private, personal interests of the individual, in whom it prevails. The new disposition is with the same propriety styled *Disinterestedness; Love; Good-will; Benevolence;* a spirit, inclining him, in whom it exists, to subordinate his own private interest to the general welfare, and to find his own happiness in the common prosperity of the divine kingdom. The part, the place, and the enjoyments, which God assigns to him as a member of this kingdom, he is inclined to take, not with submission only, but with cheerfulness; as being that, which is ordered by infinite Wisdom, and is therefore the best, and most desirable.

This new disposition is also opposed to the former, particularly as it regards our Maker. The former, or *carnal mind is enmity against God;* opposed to his character, and to his pleasure: the

new one is conformed to his pleasure, and delighted with his character. He, in whom it exists, *delights in the law of God after the inner man; and esteems it as more to be chosen than the most fine gold, and sweeter than honey and the honey-comb.*

The former disposition is an impenitent devotion to sin; attended, at times, and after some of its grosser perpetrations, by remorse perhaps, and self-condemnation, but never by a real loathing of the sin itself, nor by that ingenuous *sorrow* for it, *which is after a Godly sort.* The new disposition is a real hatred of sin; a sincere, and, if I may so term it, an instinctive sorrow for every transgression of the divine commands, whenever such transgression is present to the view of the mind.

The former disposition was a general spirit of unbelief, or distrust, towards God, his invitations, promises, and designs: a distrust, especially exercised towards the Redeemer, and towards his righteousness as the foundation of our acceptance with God. The new one is a humble, steadfast, affectionate confidence in God, his declarations, and designs; exercised particularly towards Christ, as the Saviour of mankind, the propitiation for sin, and the true and living way to eternal glory. This confidence, or, as it is most usually termed in the New Testament, this *faith*, is a vital principle in the soul, producing every act of real obedience; every act, in man, which is pleasing to God.

In all these particulars, united, the new disposition is termed *Godliness* or *Piety.*

The former disposition is inclined to the indulgence of those lusts, or passions and appetites, which immediately respect ourselves; such as pride, vanity, sloth, lewdness, and intemperance. The new one is opposed to all these; is humble, modest, diligent, chaste, and temperate. In this view, it is styled *Temperance, Moderation,* or *Self-government.*

As, in all these things, the spirit, communicated in our regeneration, not only differs so greatly from that, which we possess by nature, but is so directly opposed to it; it must be admitted, that, *in all its operations, it carries with it some evidence of its existence in the same manner, as our sinful disposition carries with it evidence of its existence.* He who denies, that holiness, in a renewed mind, can be evidenced by its nature and operations, must also deny, either that any moral character whatever can be perceived to exist, or that a holy disposition is capable of the same proof as a sinful one. That this is philosophy, too unsound to be adopted by a sober man, is so evident, as to need no illustration. Indeed, it may be doubted whether any man will openly aver this doctrine; although multitudes assert that which involves it. Certainly, a Sinner, who examines his own heart and life, must discern, that he is sinful: with equal certainty, an Angel must discern, that he himself is holy.

From what has been said of the nature of the renewed disposition it is clear, that the man, who repents of his sins; who believes in Christ; who loves, and fears God; who disinterestedly loves his neighbour, and forgives his enemies; and who employs himself daily in resisting, and subduing, his own passions and appetites; *must have some consciousness, that he does these things. In this consciousness, as it continually rises up to the view of the mind, consist the primary or original evidence, that we are Christians.* Indeed, all the evidence of this nature, which we ever possess, is no other than this consciousness, variously modified, and rendered more explicit, and satisfactory, by the aid of several things, with which, from time to time, it becomes connected.

Having made these general observations, I shall proceed to state the following particulars, in which, I apprehend, this evidence will be especially seen.

1st. *The renewed mind relishes all Spiritual Objects.*

Every man knows what it is to relish natural objects; such as agreeable food, ease, warmth, rest, friends, beauty, novelty, and grandeur. Every man knows, that *these objects are relished, also, in themselves; for their own sake; as being in themselves pleasant to the mind, independently of consequences, and of all other extraneous considerations. In the same manner,* according to what is here intended, *are spiritual objects relished by the renewed mind.* A Christian regards the character of God, the character of Christ, the divine law, the Gospel, and his own duty, as objects pleasing in their own nature. Thus *David*, of the religious exercises of whose mind we have a more detailed account than we have of those of any other Scriptural writer, says concerning the *Statutes of the Lord*, that *they are right; rejoicing the heart; more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter than honey, and the honey-comb.* And again; *How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold.* And again; *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon the earth, whom I desire beside thee. Oh taste, and see that the Lord is good! Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye upright in heart!* With these expressions of *David* correspond all the declarations of the other divine writers, wherever they are made. Thus St. Paul says, *I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.* Thus also, the same Apostle says, *I delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man.*

This doctrine has been extensively illustrated in the sermon lately delivered on the subject of *Joy in the Holy Ghost;* and therefore, will need the less illustration here.

It ought, however, to be remembered, that a delight in these things, because of some benefit, which we have, or imagine ourselves to have, derived from them, or which we hope to derive from them immediately, or from the relish of them; whether it be

the favour of God, comforting evidence of our christianity, or any other benefit whatever; is not the kind of relish, of which I speak. This is directed towards the things themselves; as being in themselves delightful to the taste of the mind. If the character of God is excellent; it cannot but be supposed, that this excellence must be relished by a person, suitably disposed; and *that*, although this person were to be ignorant of any manner, in which he himself was to derive personal benefit from it.

Wherever this relish exists, it will ordinarily show itself not only in the manner, in which the mind immediately regards spiritual objects, but in its remoter operations. Thus, if a man really relishes the worship of God, he will be apt to be regularly employed in it at all proper seasons. He will find himself inclined to ejaculatory prayer; to pray in his closet, in the family, and in the Church. If he loves the Scriptures; he will be apt to read them regularly, much, and often. If he relishes the company of religious persons; he will naturally frequent it; seek it; and derive from it when enjoyed, a sensible pleasure.

To *secret prayer* there seems to be hardly any allurement, sufficient to keep the regular practice of it alive for a great length of time, beside a relish for communion with God. It is plain, that secret prayer cannot be continued, with a view to be seen of men, or the hope of acquiring reputation. As in its own nature it cannot but be disrelished by every sinner; it seems, as if it must, of course, be soon dropped, where piety does not keep it alive. Thus *Job* seems to have reasoned, when he said concerning *the hypocrite, Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?* Job xxvii. 10. As if he said, "He will not delight himself in the Almighty; and therefore, will not always, or throughout life, continue to pray to God: but will cease from this practice, after the casual feelings, and views, which gave birth to it, have ceased to operate." A continued relish for secret prayer furnishes, therefore, a strong and hopeful testimony, that we are Christians.

St. John informs us, that the *love of Christians*, also, is a satisfactory proof, that *we* are Christians. *Hereby we know, that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.* As this subject was extensively considered in the discourse on *Brotherly Love;* it will be unnecessary to dwell upon it here. It will, however, be proper to observe, that we are not, in the present case, supposed to love Christians, because they are our personal friends; or because they have been, or are expected to be, useful to us; but because they are Christians; and on account of the excellence and amiableness of the Christian spirit, which they possess and manifest. For this reason God loves them; that is, with the love usually termed Complacency; and for this reason only; since he can plainly receive no benefit from them. For the same reason they are loved by their fellow-Christians.

In order to know whether we love them, it will be proper to ask ourselves the questions, mentioned in the discourse alluded to. "Do we love their goodness of character? Do we seek their company? Do we relish their conversation? Do we take pleasure in their Christian conduct? Do we pray for their prosperity, their holiness, and their salvation?"

I shall only add, under this head, that with respect to all spiritual objects we are carefully to inquire, whether we relish them at all; and whether we relish them for themselves; for the excellence, which they possess; or for some apprehended benefit, which may be derived from them to ourselves.

2 dly. *Real religion is always accordant with the dictates of Reason, enlightened by Revelation.*

By this I intend, that it is not, on the one hand, the mere result of passion, affection, or impulse; as in every case of Enthusiasm; and that it is not, on the other, the result of mere philosophy, or the decisions of human Reason, unenlightened by revelation; as is the case with the professed Natural Religion of Deists. The good *conscience* of a good man is, on the one hand, *purged from* these *dead works;* and, on the other, exercises such a control over all the affections, as to direct their various operations, steadily, towards that, which the Scriptures have pronounced to be true and right.

Religion, in the Scriptural sense, is *a reasonable*, not a casual, nor an instinctive, *service*. Man acts in it not as an animal, under the mere impulse of animal affections: not as a subject of mere passion; not as a creature of mere imagination; nor as a mere subject of all these united, but as a rational being, in whom the understanding governs, and in whom the affections only aid, animate, and obey. There are Christians in profession, whose religion seems to be nothing, but a compound of mere impulses, and affections. There are others, whose religion appears to be little else, beside a cold, heartless collection of propositions, or doctrines, quietly lying side by side in the understanding, without any influence on the heart, or on the life. In the Religion of the Gospel, the *Heart* is plainly made the great essential; but it is *the heart, under the steady direction, and rational control, of the understanding. Real Christianity is the Energy*, or *Active power, of the soul, steadily directed to that, which is believed to be right, and thus directed to it, merely because it is right.* That, which is aimed at, is loved, and pursued, because of its rectitude, admitted on satisfactory and solid evidence.

From this source, the renewed man is furnished with important evidence of his sanctification. If he finds in himself a steady disposition to learn, as far as possible, the true import of the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel, and, in this manner, the real nature of his own duty: if he loves moral rectitude in such a degree, as anxiously to inquire what it is; and if, when he has learned what

it is, he is disposed to yield to proof and conviction, and pursue his duty, because it is seen to be his duty: he may justly be satisfied, that he is really renewed.

But if, on the contrary, he is accustomed to obey the casual impulses of feeling and imagination: if he is disposed to think highly of passages of Scripture, not because they are the word of God, or are excellent in themselves; declaring important truths, or enjoining important duties; but because they have come into the mind suddenly, accidentally, and without any forethought of his own: if he is inclined to prize such texts more than others, or more than he prized the same texts before: if he is disposed to think highly of sudden starts of feeling, of thoughts, and purposes, unexpectedly coming into the mind, and to regard them as produced by an extraordinary divine agency, and therefore to value them highly as peculiar tokens of the favour of God, and as authoritative and safe guides to his own duty: if he is fond of indulging a lively imagination about the things of religion: of forming to himself awful views concerning the world of misery, and the sufferings of its inhabitants; or bright and beautiful visions of the light and splendour of heaven, and the glory of its inhabitants; or charming images of the person of Christ, as beautiful in form, ravishing in aspect, and surrounded with radiance; or as meek, gentle, looking with compassion; or smiling with complacency, on himself: if he is inclined to rest on these feelings, and impulses, as the peculiar foundations of his hope, consolation, and confidence; or as any foundations of hope and confidence at all: I will not say, that such a man is not renewed; but I will say, that he trusts without evidence, and builds upon sand. I will further say, that he is miserably deluded with regard to this great subject; that he feeds on wind, and not on food; and that by directing his eye to false objects, from which he never can derive any real good, he loses the golden privilege of gaining solid support, and Evangelical comfort, from those sources whence alone God has intended they should be derived.

3dly. *The prevalence of a meek and humble disposition furnishes the mind with good reason to believe, that it is renewed.*

The natural spirit of man is universally proud and irritable. No part of the human character is more predominant, more pleasant to ourselves, more deceitful, or more universal. At the same time, as we might expect, none is so much cherished by the mind. A great part of the perfection, aimed at, and delineated, by the wise men of heathen antiquity, was formed of pride. Stoical pride is proverbial. The love of glory, according to *Cicero*, was virtue, or real excellence of character.

Devoted as we are to the indulgence of pride, it is, perhaps, of all passions the most unworthy and mischievous; the most irritable, the most unforgiving, the most wrathful, the most contentious, and the most oppressive. The world has been filled by it

with private quarrels and public wars; with wretchedness at the fireside; with turmoil in the neighbourhood; and with bloodshed and desolation in the great scenes of national activity. It has brought forth the tyrant; and nursed the conqueror.

The Religion of the Gospel has laid the axe at the root of this passion. Christ, the glorious Author of this Religion, has exhibited, in his own life, a character perfectly contrasted to pride, in every degree, and in every exercise. This character he has beautifully expressed in that memorable and delightful declaration, subjoined to the most consoling invitation, and the happiest tidings, ever published to the children of men. *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek, and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* In conformity with this declaration, his whole life was a life of meekness and humility. In conformity with this declaration also, he has every where, in the Gospel, preferred, as was remarked in one of the discourses on his character, the meek and lowly virtues to the magnanimous and splendid ones. He has inculcated them oftener; has dwelt on them more; has enjoined them in stronger terms; and has made them in a higher degree indispensable.

As these virtues, then, are such a prominent and essential part of Christianity; it will be easily seen, that they must be found in every Christian. So long as pride is the predominating spirit of man, he must know, if acquainted at all with himself, that he is not sanctified. A great part of the influence of the Spirit of sanctification, is employed in annihilating this haughty, self-dependent disposition. One of the first perceptible effects of this influence is the humility of the Gospel. A humble mind is, of course, meek, little disposed to feel provocations deeply; uninclined to construe them in the worst manner; and still more indisposed to requite them with wrath and revenge. What is thus the natural result of the Christian spirit is continually strengthened by the general disposition of the Christian to obey the precepts, and to follow the example, of his Master; both conspiring to enforce on him the same conduct in the most powerful manner. He knows, that Christ has required the *same mind which was in himself*, (and peculiar in this respect) to be in all his followers. He sees the beauty and glory of the disposition in his great example. He knows, that nothing, without it, will render him acceptable to God, or qualify him for admission into his kingdom. With these mighty motives in view, it seems impossible, that this disposition, once begun in the soul, should fail to manifest itself, in some good degree, by its genuine and happy effects.

The evidence, which it furnishes to the mind of its renovation, is two-fold. Its former dispositions are weakened; and new ones have begun to prevail in their place. Pride is enfeebled in all its operations; the propensity to wrath is lessened; and humility and

meekness, (not an insensibility to injuries, but a serene quiet of soul under them) have, like beautiful twin sisters, entered the mind, and made it their permanent habitation.

He, who finds this his own state, possesses desirable evidence, that he is a Christian.

4thly. *Without a prevailing spirit of gentleness towards others, we cannot have sound and Scriptural evidence of our Christianity.*

This is a kindred subject to the last. The natural character of man is rough, revengeful, and unforgiving; disposed to overbear, to carry his measures by force and violence, to listen little to the wishes and reasons of others, and to arrogate to himself and his concerns, an importance, which, all impartial persons see, does not belong to them.

To this spirit, also, the Gospel is directly, and equally opposed. It enjoins, every where, a spirit of gentleness, moderation, and forgiveness, towards all men. Its author was wonderfully distinguished by softness and sweetness of disposition. He never intruded on the rights of others. He used no force, nor even wrought a single miracle, to vindicate his own. He *neither cried, nor lifted up, nor caused his voice to be heard in the streets.* In the garden he healed the ear of *Malchus;* and on the cross he prayed for his murderers. At the same time he required all his followers to possess, and exhibit, the same gentle and forgiving disposition, on pain of not being otherwise themselves forgiven. Nay, he has forbidden them to ask forgiveness of God upon any other condition. *The servant of the Lord,* saith *St. Paul, must not strive, but be gentle towards all men.*

The existence, and influence, of this part of the Christian character, are especially seen in cases where we have been injured, and towards those who have injured us. If, beside quietly receiving injuries, we exercise a benevolent spirit towards those who have done them; if we can lay aside all thoughts of retaliation; if we can show them kindness; if we can rejoice in their prosperity; if we can feel and relieve their distresses; if we can heartily pray for their well-being; we have good reason to conclude, that *the same mind, which was in Christ, is also in us.*

5thly. *A willingness to perform, accompanied by the actual performance of the duties, required by the Gospel, is an indispensable evidence of Christianity.*

There are multitudes of persons in the Christian world, who appear to place Religion *greatly,* if not *wholly,* in such feelings of the mind, as are rarely, or never, followed by any of those overt acts of obedience, which are commonly called Christian duties. Their *love,* contrary to the injunction given by *St. John,* appears to exist *only in word, and in tongue; not in deed, and,* therefore, we have reason to fear, not *in truth.* We find persons of this character willing to converse much on religious subjects; to dwell on the nature of religious affections; to canvass abundantly the doctrines

of the Gospel; to explain minutely the nature of its precepts; to expose such tenets of others, as they esteem erroneous; to defend strenuously such, as they think true; and often to mix with all these things not a little censure of those, who differ from them in opinion and character. I will not say, that these persons are destitute of Religion; but I will say, that, so far, they furnish little reason, why others should believe them religious.

Real Religion is ever active; and always inclined to *do*, as well as to *say*. The end, for which man was made, and for which he was redeemed, was, that he might do good, and actively glorify his Creator. To this end all the instructions and precepts of the Gospel were given; all the blessings of Providence; and all the influences of the Spirit of God. All these, therefore, are frustrated, and are without efficacy, where men do not thus act. The business of a Christian is not to say to others, *Be ye warmed, and be ye filled; depart in peace;* but to feed and clothe them. This, I acknowledge, may be done by such as are not Christians; but he, who does it not, cannot, so far as I see, be a Christian. Active obedience is the only visible fruit, by which our religious character is discovered to others; and the fruit, by which, in a manner peculiarly happy, it is known to ourselves.

To render this evidence of our sanctification satisfactory, it should, in the first place, be uniform.

By this I intend, that *our active obedience should proceed in a manner, generally regular, through life.* I intend, that it should not exist by fits and starts; be cold to-day, and warm to-morrow; now zealous, now indifferent; at one time, animated by a strong sense of heavenly things, at another, absorbed in those of earth; at one time, charitable, perhaps even to excess, at another, *withholding more than is meet:* and all this, according to the rise, and prevalence, of different natural feelings. The spirit of Christianity is *one* in its nature, and therefore uniform in its operations. These, indeed, are diversified, as the objects, which they respect, vary. Thus the same disposition sorrows for sin, which rejoices in the Holy Ghost; and is at peace with itself, while it contends with its spiritual enemies. Still, a single character runs through them all; differing indeed in degree, but not in kind. Under its influence, the life will wear one general aspect. By ourselves, therefore, if we examine, and by others, who are attentive to our conduct, it will be seen to be of the same nature, and to produce the same effects, throughout the progress of life. I do not mean, that we shall not backslide; or that we shall not have lukewarm, uncomfortable, unprofitable, and unexemplary seasons. These, unhappily, occur but too often. A field of wheat may grow, with different vigour; may, at times, be checked by cold, and stinted by drought; and may, at other times, and under the influence of refreshing showers, and kindly seasons, flourish with strength, verdure, and

beauty. Still it will always be a field of wheat, and not of tares and darnel.

Secondly. *This obedience must, for the same end, be Universal.* By this I intend, that *it must extend alike to all those duties, which immediately respect God, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves.* Real virtue, or the religion of the Gospel, never exists by halves. There is no such thing, as being pious, and not benevolent; or being benevolent, and not pious; or being both, and not self-governed. *Religion, in this sense, is a spirit of obedience to God; and regards all his commands alike.*

If, then, we would derive from our obedience that satisfactory evidence of our Christianity, which it is capable of furnishing; we should examine ourselves concerning our whole conduct, and inquire how far it wears this universal character. We should inquire diligently whether we regularly, and steadily, employ ourselves, at all proper seasons, in the worship of God; in reading the Scriptures; in communion with Christians; in communion with our own hearts; in watching, striving, and praying, against our lusts within, and our enemies without; in overcoming *the world, the flesh, and the devil;* in resisting, especially, the *sins, which most easily beset us;* in raising our thoughts and affections to heavenly objects; and in endeavouring, effectually, to make in the present life preparation for eternity. Universally, we should inquire whether we live alway in the fear, love, and service of God; with a spirit of dependence, confidence, submission, contentment, and gratitude.

Among the duties to which we are summoned by the Gospel, those, which we owe immediately to our fellow-creatures, and to ourselves, are there exhibited as being of very high and indispensable importance. They are every where insisted on in the plainest, strongest, and most affecting manner; are commended, urged, enjoined, and promised a reward, from the beginning to the end of the Bible. At the same time, the neglect, and the violation, of them, are condemned in the severest terms; and threatened, under the most glowing images, with the severest punishment. *Who,* says the Psalmist, *shall abide in thy tabernacle; who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He, that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart; that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour; in whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them, that fear the Lord: He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not: He, that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh a reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things, shall never be moved. If ye forgive men their trespasses,* said our Saviour to his disciples, *your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: But, if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.* The servant, who owed ten thousand talents to his Lord,

had his debt readily forgiven. But, when he oppressed his fellow-servant, his Lord delivered him over to the tormentors, till he should pay the debt. *If any man will not work, neither let him eat. If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house; he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. Be not deceived,* says *St. Paul, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. Blessed,* says *David, is he, that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.* And, what may serve instead of a volume upon this subject, Christ, seated on the throne of final judgment, will, as he declares, *say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye ministered unto me: and, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, my brethren; ye did it unto me. To them on the left hand, he will* also *say, Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not:* and, *inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of these, my brethren; ye did it not to me.*

From these passages of Scripture it will be seen irresistibly, that the duties of these two classes are, in the eye of God, of incalculable importance, *and are indispensable to the Christian character and to the attainment of salvation.*

Let it not be supposed for a moment, however, that I intend to prefer these duties to those, which immediately respect God. Piety, certainly, holds the first place in a virtuous character: but no man loves God, who does not love his fellow-men, and control his own passions and appetites. *As the body without the spirit is dead; so faith without* good *works is dead also. He, that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

There is one point of view, in which these duties more effectually evince the Christian character, and prove the reality of our Religion, than most of those, which are classed under the name of Piety. It is this: *They ordinarily demand a greater degree of self-denial.* A man may ordinarily practise the visible duties of piety, without any serious sacrifice of his worldly inclinations. He may read the Scriptures; and teach them to his children. He may attend the worship of God in his family, and in the sanctuary. He may be present in private religious assemblies. He may converse much, and often, on religious subjects. He may be very zealous about all these duties. He may commune at the table of Christ. He may preach the Gospel. Yet, instead of crossing his

inclinations, or denying himself, he may feel, that he is purchasing a Christian character at a cheap rate; that he is securing to himself the best friends; that he is opening an easy way to distinction, to influence, and in the end, to wealth; and that he is, upon the whole, making in this manner, a very gainful bargain. Nay, he may, in this manner, more easily than in any other, quiet his own conscience; persuade himself, that he is a Christian; feel satisfied, that he has a title to eternal life; and thus, while he thinks he is performing his duty, be only seeking for the pleasure, found in these things; pleasure, which, though derived from sacred objects, is merely natural; and differs in nothing important from that, which is furnished by pleasant food, fine weather, or a beautiful landscape.

But when a man is called to resist his passions and appetites; when he is required to be humble, meek, patient, forgiving, just, sincere, merciful, sober, chaste, and temperate; when he is required to communicate his property liberally to the poor, the stranger, and the public; and practically to *remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give, than to receive:* he is required, of course, to sacrifice *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.* He is required to give up his pride, vanity, ambition, anger, avarice, and sensuality.—These darling inclinations, which constitute what is called in the Scriptures *the love of the world*, together with all the objects, on which they are pampered, he is obliged to yield up to the love of God.

Nothing more strongly evinces the sincerity of any professions, than the fact, that they are followed by serious self-denial. Accordingly, the Scriptures have placed peculiar stress upon self-denial, as evidential of the genuineness of a Christian profession. *If any man will be my disciple*, said our Saviour, *Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. If any man will save his life, he shall lose it; and, if any man will lose his life for my sake, he shall find it. Go, and sell all that thou hast*, said he to the young Ruler, *and give to the poor, and come, and follow me; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. Love not the world*, says *St. John, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

When, therefore, we find the love of the world actually prevailing, and clearly manifested in the life and conversation of persons who make a profession of religion; the evidence of their piety, of whatever nature it may be, must be exceedingly diminished in the eye of sober charity. Whatever zeal they may discover in attending upon public or private worship; however well they may converse upon religious subjects; whatever feelings they may discover in such conversation; and whatever bright discoveries they may seem to enjoy concerning the mercy or glory of God, or the love and excellence of Christ; if, still, they are greedy of gain; absorbed in the world; peevish; discontented; wrathful; slothful;

sensual; unfeeling; vain of their attainments; uncharitable; particularly, if they are eagerly engaged in the pursuit of place, power, popularity, and fame; and more particularly still, if they refuse to give to the poor, or give leanly and grudgingly, or deny aid to others in other distresses; there will be little reason left to believe them children of God. How can these persons expect Christ to say at the final judgment, *I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me?* How can he say, *Ye did it unto the least of these, my brethren?* Were he on earth, and should tell them, as he told the young Ruler, *Go, and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor;* would they not *go away sorrowful?* Would they not feel, that even to *have treasure in heaven,* upon these conditions, would be a hard bargain?

There have been, there are still, multitudes of mankind; and it is to be feared, that in this land, and at the present time, the number is not small; of those, who intend to go to heaven with a cheap religion: a religion, in which *the love of the world* is made to harmonize with *the love of the Father.* This religion consists of feelings, views, discoveries, conversation about these and other religious subjects, and zeal in attending upon external religious duties. But *whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him; how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

It is easy for any man, who thinks, that he is loved of God, to love Him in turn. But this is not that love of God, which he requires. The feelings, and views, which do not prompt us to virtuous conduct, are of no value. If we would prove ourselves to be Christians; we should, then, diligently ask ourselves whether we aim at being strictly just, sincere, and faithful; whether we actually show kindness to all men, whether friends or enemies, strangers or neighbours; whether we *do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again;* whether we befriend, and promote, public, useful, and charitable designs; employing both our substance and efforts, as either may be needed; whether we love the souls of others, oppose their sins, and promote in them reformation and piety; and whether we are watchfully sober, chaste, temperate, diligent in our callings, and active in our opposition to every worldly lust.

Finally; concerning all these things we should carefully ask whether we take delight in such a life, as this; and *that* notwithstanding all the opposition, ridicule, and contempt of the world.

Among the different acts, or kinds, of obedience, also, *particular attention is due to those which involve peculiar self-denial.* When the avaricious man becomes generous and charitable; the ambitious man contented with his circumstances; the proud man humbled; the wrathful man meek; the revengeful man forgiving; and the sensualist sober, chaste, and temperate; in a word, when we drop our reigning sins, and assume the contrary virtues, of set and

cordial purpose: we are furnished with strong reason to believe, that we are Christians.

6thly. *The Increase of all these things in the mind, and life, is, perhaps, the clearest of all the evidences of Personal Religion.*

St. Paul informs us, that *he did not count himself to have apprehended:* that is, he did not consider himself as having attained that degree of excellence, which belonged to his Christian profession. *But*, saith he, *this one thing I do:* or perhaps, as the omission in the text is supplied by *Doddridge*, *this one thing I can say: Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before*, (in the Greek, *reaching out eagerly*) *I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* What was the conduct of *Paul* is the *duty* of all Christians; and is accordingly enjoined by him in the following verse. In greater or less degrees it is their *conduct* also. They are directed *so to run, that they may obtain;* and to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; to increase, and abound, in love one towards another, and towards all men.*

As it is the duty of Christians to fulfil these precepts; so it is the nature of Christianity to accord with them, by increasing, from time to time, their strength and vigour. The more the spirit of the Gospel is exercised, the more we love to exercise it. The more the pleasure found in it, is enjoyed, the more it is coveted. The more habitual its principles and practices become, the greater is the strength which they acquire. Indeed, nothing is vigorous and powerful, in man, beside that which is habitual.

Hence it is plain, that, in investigating our religious character, we should examine it with a particular reference to its growth. To grow is its proper nature. If it is not seen to grow, then, we either do not see it as it is; or it does not exist in us, in its genuine character; but is feeble, fading, sickly, clogged with incumbrances, and in a great measure hidden from view. Man is never for any length of time stationary. Either he is advancing or receding, in every thing which pertains to him; and in Religion, as truly, as in his natural endowments, or acquisitions. Declension in Religion, I need not say, furnishes a melancholy evidence, that we are not religious. It is no less obvious, that a regular progress in his various graces, and attainments, must, on the contrary, become a clear and delightful testimony of our Christian character. There is not only more of Religion to be seen in ourselves; but it is discerned with clearer conviction, and certainty, to be genuine; because it appears as real Religion naturally appears, in its own proper character of growth and improvement. He, who loves, fears, and serves God more and more: who is more and more just, sincere, and merciful, to his fellow-men; and who is more and more self-governed in all his appetites and passions, weaned from the world, and spiritually and heavenly minded; cannot want the best reasons, furnished in our present state, to believe, that he is a child of God.

SERMON XC.

EVIDENCES OF REGENERATION.—DIFFICULTIES, ATTENDING THE APPLICATION OF THESE EVIDENCES TO OURSELVES.

2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 5.—*Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates?*

IN the last discourse but one, I proposed, from these words, to examine,

I. *Some of the Imaginary evidences of Regeneration;*

II. *Some of the Real evidences;* and,

III. *Some of the Difficulties, which attend the Application of the real evidences to ourselves.*

There has been much debate in the Christian world, concerning *the Faith of Assurance;* or as it is in better language styled by St. Paul, *the full Assurance of hope.* The question debated has, however, not been, *whether men felt assured, that they were Christians, but whether this assurance has been evangelical,* or *built on satisfactory and Scriptural evidence.* That such a faith has existed I have no doubt; nor do I see how it can be rationally doubted. That the Apostles were evangelically assured of their own piety, and consequent salvation, must be admitted by all, who believe the Scriptures. *I have fought a good fight,* says *St. Paul, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. For me to live is Christ; to die is gain. We know,* says *St. John, that we have passed from death unto life.*

From the accounts given us concerning the first Martyrs, I think we cannot hesitate to admit, that they also were the subjects of the same faith. Nor is the evidence concerning a number of those, who have lived and suffered, in modern times, less convincing to *me.* These men have, in various instances, lived in a manner eminently evangelical; have devoted themselves, through a long period, to the service of God, with so much humility, self-denial, uniformity, steadfastness, and evangelical zeal; have laboured for the good of their fellow-creatures with so much disinterestedness, charity, and constancy; have lived so much above the world, and with a conversation so heavenly; that, when they are declaring themselves possessed of this faith, and have died with peace, and exultation, which must be supposed to result from it, we cannot, unless by wilful rejection of evidence, hesitate to admit, that they were possessed of this enviable attainment. Indeed, I can hardly doubt, that any man, who reads their history with candour, will

readily admit the doctrine, so far as the men, to whom I refer, are concerned. But, if these things be admitted, it will probably be readily conceded, that there are, in every country, and in every age, where Christianity prevails, some persons, who enjoy the Faith, or Hope, of assurance.

At the same time, I am fully persuaded, that the number of these persons is not very great. If the Christians, and Ministers, with whom I have had opportunity to converse, many of whom have been eminently exemplary in their lives, may be allowed to stand as representatives of Christians in general; it must certainly be true, that the faith of assurance is not common.

Indeed, I am persuaded, that this blessing is much more frequently experienced in times, and places, of affliction and persecution, than in seasons of peace and prosperity. Severe trials and sufferings furnish, of themselves, clearer proofs of the piety of those who are tried, than can ordinarily be furnished by circumstances of ease and quiet. The Faith, which will patiently submit, which will encounter, which will endure, which will overcome, in periods of great affliction, has, in this very process, both acquired, and exhibited, peculiar strength; and furnished evidence of its genuineness, which can hardly be derived from any other source.

At the same time, it is, I think, irresistibly inferred from the declarations, contained in the word of God, and from the history of his providence, recorded both within, and without the Scriptures, that God, in his infinite mercy, furnishes his children with peculiar support and consolation in times of peculiar trial; and that, as their *day is*, *so* he causes their *strength* to *be*. Among the means of consolation, enjoyed by Christians, none seems better adapted to furnish them with the necessary support, under severe distresses, than an assurance, that they are Children of God. Accordingly, this very consolation appears to have been given to the suffering Saints of the Old and New Testament, as a peculiar support to them in their peculiar trials. From analogy it might be concluded, and from the history of facts it may with the strongest probability, if not with absolute certainty, be determined, that the same blessing has been given, in times of eminent affliction, to Saints in every succeeding age of the Church.

Still there is no reason to think, that the Faith of assurance is generally attained among eminent Christians. This fact has sometimes been called in question; sometimes denied; and oftener wondered at. "Why," it is inquired, "are not Christians oftener, nay, why are they not generally, assured of their gracious state? There certainly is a difference between sin and holiness, sufficiently broad to be seen, and marked. The Scriptures have actually marked this difference with such clearness, and exactness, as to give us ample information concerning both the nature, and the limits, of these great moral attributes. They have separated those

who possess them, into two classes, not only entirely distinct, but directly opposite to each other: so opposite, that the one class is styled in them, the friends, and the other the enemies, of God. Further, they present to us various means of judging, by which we are directed, as well as encouraged and enabled, to try, and estimate, our own religious character. The subject is, also, so spoken of in the Scriptures, as naturally to lead us into the conclusion, that these different characters may be distinctly known; and that it is our duty so to act, as, upon the whole, to form satisfactory views concerning our moral condition. Finally; the Writers of the New Testament, and indeed of the Old also, speak of themselves, as knowing their own piety; and of others, as able to know theirs."

To these observations I answer, in the first place, that holiness and sin are, in themselves, thus clearly distinguishable. Angels cannot but know, that they are holy; and fiends that they are sinful.

Secondly; This difference is sufficiently marked in the Scriptures. If we saw holiness in ourselves, exactly as it is exhibited in the Scriptures; that is, unmixed; we should certainly know ourselves to be holy.

Thirdly; Holy and Sinful men, are just as different from each other, as they are represented in the Scriptures; but this does not enable us to determine which they are.

Fourthly; The means, furnished us, in the Scriptures, of judging concerning our religious character, are, undoubtedly, the best which the nature of our circumstances will admit; and such, as, if correctly applied to ourselves, and known to be thus applied, would undoubtedly decide this great point in a satisfactory manner. Still, this does not infer, that it usually will, or can, be thus decided.

Fifthly; We are undoubtedly required, in the Scriptures, to examine ourselves; and the performance of this duty, while it is indispensable on our part, unquestionably may be, and is of great importance to us; although we may not, as a consequence of it, become possessed of the Faith of Assurance.

Sixthly, The Writers in the Old and New Testament did, in many instances, certainly know, that they were holy; but they were inspired. It will not therefore follow, that others, who are uninspired, will, of course, possess the same knowledge of their own state.

Seventhly; The Scriptural Writers very extensively use the words *know*, and *knowledge*, not in the sense of *absolute science*, but to denote, *belief*, *persuasion*, *a strong hope*, &c.: in the same manner, as these terms are used in common speech. We cannot, therefore, certainly conclude, from the use of these terms with respect to this subject, that the divine writers expected those, to whom they wrote, generally to possess the faith of Assurance.

Finally; It *is* our duty to possess this faith. It is also our duty to be perfect. Yet *St. John* says of himself, and all other Christians, *If we say, that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* As therefore, notwithstanding this duty, no man is perfect; so, notwithstanding the duty of obtaining the faith of Assurance, few persons may actually possess it.

The real difficulty is chiefly passed by, in all the observations, made above; and lies in applying the Scriptural evidences of holiness to our own particular cases. This subject, I shall now attempt to examine in several particulars.

The difficulties, which attend the application of these evidences to ourselves, arise from various sources. Among them, the following will be found to possess a very serious influence.

1st. *The vast importance of the case.*

A case of great moment is, at all times, apt strongly to agitate our minds. Men, deeply interested by any concern, are, therefore, considered as less capable of discerning clearly, and judging justly, than the same men, when dispassionate. As this is the subject even of proverbial declaration, it cannot need proof. The case in hand is of infinite moment to each individual. Whenever he brings it to view, he is prone to feel a degree, and often not a small one, of anxiety. It is therefore seen, together with the evidences which attend it, by the mind, through the medium of disturbed feelings. Earnest wishes to find satisfaction, on the one hand, and strong apprehensions, lest it should not be found, on the other, naturally disorder that calm temperament, which is so necessary to clear investigation, and satisfactory conclusions. In this state, the mind is prone to be unsatisfied with its own investigation; fears, that it has not acted impartially; suspects, that it has not viewed the evidence, possessed by it, in a just light; and, when its judgments are favourable to itself, is prone to tremble, lest they have been too favourable, and the result of biassed inclinations, rather than of clear discernment. A presumptuous decision in its favour it perfectly well knows to be full of danger; and is ready to think almost every favourable judgment presumptuous. In this situation, all such judgments are apt to be regarded with a general suspicion; and the mind chooses rather to continue unsatisfied, and to undergo the distresses of anxiety and alarm, than to hazard the danger of ill-founded conclusions in its own favour. Most Christians are, I believe, so strongly convinced, that a state of anxiety will contribute to make them alive, and awake, to the danger of backsliding, to quicken them in their duty, and to secure them from carelessness and sloth; and that, therefore, it will have a happy influence toward rendering them safe; as willingly to judge too unfavourably, rather than too favourably, of their own religious character. An unfavourable judgment, they know, does not render the character itself any worse; but only deprives them of the consolation, which, with more favourable views of it, they might

enjoy: while the contrary opinion might naturally slacken them in their duty; and, perhaps, prevent them finally from obtaining salvation.

2dly. *Another source of difficulties is found in the Peculiar Natural Character of those, who are employed in this investigation.*

Some of these persons are naturally inclined to hope; others to fear: some to cheerfulness; others to melancholy. Some are rash: others are cautious. Some are ignorant: others are well informed. But the evidences, which establish, or should establish, a favourable judgment of our Christian character, are, in substance, always the same. As applied to persons of these different characters, they must, however, be seen in very different lights; because, although Religion is the same thing, yet so much of the peculiar natural character of the man remains, after he has become religious, as to render him a very different man from every other religious man. *Paul* and *John* were both eminently religious. Their religion was the same thing; but the men were widely different from each other. If Christians, so eminent, and excellent, could differ in this manner; how much more different from each other must be ordinary Christians! How much more must the natural traits of character remain in *them:* particularly, such as, in a greater or less degree, are sinful! The whole object, therefore, presented to the judgment of the individual, must differ, and often greatly, in different cases.

For example; one person becomes the subject of piety after a wise, careful, religious education; early and uninterrupted habits of conscientiousness; in the possession of a naturally sweet and amiable temper; in an original and regular course of filial duty, fraternal kindness, and exemplary conduct to those around him; and in the midst of a life, generally commendable and lovely. Another, scarcely educated at all, possessed of a rough, gross, and violent disposition; and shamefully vicious from early life, is sanctified in the midst of scandalous indulgencies, and rank habits of sin.

It is perfectly obvious, that these two persons will differ mightily from each other in the visible degree of that change of conduct, which flows from their Religion. The former will perhaps be scarcely changed at all even to an observing eye: for he has heretofore done, and in a certain sense loved to do, in many particulars, the very things, which Religion requires, and to which it prompts: and thus the tenour of his life will seem to those around him much the same, after, as before, his Conversion. The latter, sanctified in the same degree, will, it is plain, change almost the whole course of *his* conduct; and assume a life, entirely new, and directly opposite to that which he led before.

Nor will the difference be small in the internal state of these individuals. The sanctified affections, and purposes, of the former will, in many instances, so blend themselves with those, which he

has derived from nature and habit, as to be often distinguished with difficulty, and not unfrequently to be entirely undistinguishable. Those of the latter, on the contrary, will be wholly opposite, in most instances, to all that he has heretofore thought, felt, and designed.

As the internal and external conduct of these individuals is the sole ground, on which each must judge of himself, as well as be judged of, by others; it is perfectly obvious, that the objects, concerning which they are respectively to judge, are widely different from each other. But this is not all. *The optics*, with which these persons judge concerning their religious state, will plainly be widely different. Our dispositions naturally influence our judgment; and usually enter much more largely into the opinions which we form, than we are aware. Thus a person, strongly inclined to hope, will, almost of course, judge favourably; when a person, equally inclined to fear, would, in the very same case, judge unfavourably; concerning himself. Cheerful persons naturally entertain comfortable views concerning themselves; those, who are melancholy, such, and often such only, as are uncomfortble, discouraging, and distressing. The rash, form bold and presumptuous opinions without hesitation: the cautious, admit opinions, favourable to themselves, slowly; even when they are admitted upon acknowledged evidence. The ignorant must be very imperfectly fitted to consider the various means of evidence, all of which ought to be consulted, in forming our opinions concerning this important subject: while the enlightened Christian must be much more competent to draw up a well-founded determination.

3dly. *The similar nature of those, which we call Natural views and affections, to those which are Evangelical, furnishes another source of these difficulties.*

Love and hatred, hope and fear, joy and sorrow, confidence and shame, together with various other affections, and views of the mind, really exist, and operate in the Christian, as *Natural views and affections;* and not merely *Evangelical.* The objects, which excite these affections in both senses, are often the same. The emotions themselves are, also, so much alike, as perceived by the mind, that mankind universally, and the Scriptural writers as well as others, call them by the same names. When both are described by those, who are the subjects of them, the description, to a great extent, is commonly the same. It will, therefore, be easily believed, that they are so similar in their nature, as, when they arise from the same objects, to render it difficult for the Christian in whom they exist, and at times impossible, to distinguish them from each other. It will be also easily seen, that when he, who is not a Christian, has these affections and views excited in his mind by the objects, which excite the corresponding Evangelical affections in the mind of a Christian, he may, in many instances, find it very difficult to discern, that they are not Evangelical.

To illustrate this subject, clearly, to the view of my audience, I will consider it more particularly.

A Christian loves God, his Son, his Spirit, his Law, his Gospel, his Sabbath, his Worship, and his Children. Why does he love them? For two reasons. One is; *their nature is agreeable to the relish of his mind.* The other is; *they are useful, and therefore pleasing to himself.* For both these reasons he is bound to love them. But, when he regards all the objects with this affection, it will be often difficult, and sometimes impossible, for him to determine whether his emotions are merely natural, wholly Evangelical, or mixed. He knows, that he exercises a love to God, but may be unable to determine whether he loves the character of God, considered by itself; whether he loves the divine perfections for what they are; or whether he loves God, because he regards him as a friend to himself; and delights in his perfections, because he considers them as engaged, and operating, to promote his present and eternal good. It would be difficult for most persons to determine, precisely, what views they would form of this glorious Being, if it were revealed to them, that He was their Enemy.

As it is often difficult for *the Christian* to distinguish his natural affections, which, so long as he is a man, he will always continue to exercise, from the corresponding Evangelical ones, which he exercises as a Christian: so it must, evidently, be more difficult for *an unrenewed man*, who has never had any other beside natural affections, to discern, that these are not Evangelical. When he loves God, and other divine objects, in what manner shall he determine, that he loves him, only because he believes him reconciled to himself? When he delights in the divine perfections; it will not be easy for him to see, that it is only because he supposes them to be engaged to promote his welfare. When he loves the Scriptures; it will be difficult for him to perceive, that it is only because of their sublimity and beauty; the good sense, which they contain; the happy influence, which they have on mankind; and the comforting promises, which he considers them as speaking to himself. When he loves Christians; it will often be beyond his power to determine, that it is not because of their natural amiableness of character; the agreeableness of their manners; their friendship, or kind offices, to himself; and their general usefulness to others, with whom he is connected.

A person is quiet under provocations. This may arise from meekness. It may also arise from a sense of the wisdom, the dignity, and the usefulness, of this spirit. He is kind to enemies. This may arise from the desire of obtaining the peculiar evidence, that he is a good man, furnished by this exercise of Christian benevolence; from a sense of the nobleness of forgiveness; or from the danger of not finding himself forgiven.

I might extend this course of thought through all the objects of self-examination; and show, that similar difficulties attend them

all. Every Christian must, I think, have experienced them in his own case; and every person, accustomed to converse much with others on the grounds of their hope concerning themselves, must have perceived them continually occurring in the progress of every such conversation.

4thly. *Another source of this difficulty is found in the transient nature of all our Emotions.*

By this I intend, that every exercise of our affections has only a momentary existence in the mind. It rises; is indulged; and is gone. *All our knowledge of its nature*, in the mean time, *exists in the Consciousness of it, while it is passing; in our Remembrance of that consciousness, known to be imperfect; and in our Acquaintance with its effects, often of a character more or less doubtful.*— Few words can be necessary to show, that our knowledge of these exercises, gained in this manner, must be attended by many imperfections. Our opportunity for viewing it, while it is passing, is so short, and often so carelessly employed; our remembrance of it, when it is past, is so far removed from certain accuracy; and its effects may be so easily, and, for aught that appears, so justly, attributed to various causes; that the whole view, taken of them by the mind, will frequently be obscure, and its decision unsatisfactory.

Hence appears *the wisdom of fastening upon a course of such exercises;* as furnishing far better means of determining our religious character, rather than resting it upon a few. A character may be successfully discerned in *many exercises of a similar kind*, which, usually, we shall attempt in vain to discover, to our satisfaction, *in a small number. A thousand blades of grass* will, in the Spring, give a green and living aspect to that field, which, *with a hundred*, would still retain the russet appearance of absolute death.

5thly. *Another fruitful source of the same difficulties is furnished by the Imperfect state of Religion in the mind.*

This, indeed, may, in an extensive sense, be considered as the general source of them all. I have heretofore observed, that Angels cannot but know, that they are holy; and fiends, that they are sinful. Were we perfectly holy, then, we should certainly know this to be our character.

But there are particular difficulties, attending this subject, which deserve to be marked.

The mind of every Christian experiences *many alternations of holiness and sin.* Temptations often, and unexpectedly, intrude. The objects, which engross the *whole* heart of the sinner, unhappily engage at times, *in greater or less degrees*, that of the Christian. Nor is their influence always transient. *David*, *Solomon*, and other Saints mentioned in the Scriptures, sinned for a length of time. Not a small number of sins are committed in thought, word, and action, in the brighter and better seasons; nay, in the bright-

est and best. "I sin," says Bishop Beveridge; "I repent of my sins, and sin in my repentance. I pray for forgiveness, and sin in my prayers. I resolve against my future sin, and sin in forming my resolutions. So that I may say, My whole life is almost a continued course of sin." This is the language of one of the best men that ever lived. A still better man has said, *The good, that I would, that I do not; but the evil, that I would not, that I do. I find, then, a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. After the inward man, I delight in the law of God. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man, that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

Now, the whole life, not of such men as these, but of men, who though generally of a similar character, are greatly inferior to these in religious excellence, is almost always the real object of a Christian's examination. This, also, is to be continually examined: the worst, and the best, parts alike. But it is plain that the comfortable evidence of our piety, furnished by the prevalence of holiness in the best seasons, will be always impaired by contrary evidence, in periods of declension; will sometimes be rendered obscure, and at others overbalanced. It is further evident, that, as our whole judgment will, and ought to be, usually made up, partly of the evidence furnished by our present state, and partly of our past judgments, and the evidence on which they were founded; evidence, contradicting, impairing, and obscuring each other: a degree of confusion, and uncertainty, in the views of the mind concerning its religious character, will almost necessarily result, in many instances, from this complicated and perplexed state of things.

6thly. *No small difficulties are often thrown in our way by the Backslidings of Others.*

Many persons, who are really Christians, decline, at times, from holiness of life so greatly, and so long, as to excite not only the sneers and contempt, but the just censures also, of those who *are not* Christians; and the extreme regret, and the Christian discipline, of those who *are*. Other men, in cases of this nature, frequently question, or deny, the very existence of Religion. Christians do not, indeed, go this unwarrantable length; but they cannot avoid recollecting, that, frequently, the persons, who have thus declined, were, in their view, better than themselves; and feeling the hopes, which they have entertained of their own piety, greatly lessened. They are compelled to doubt of the religion of these men; and almost irresistibly question the reality of their own.

There are other persons, who strongly believe themselves to be religious; and who, at the same time, live in such a manner, as to persuade others, that they are eminent Christians; who afterwards

prove by their conduct, that they are not Christians. *Judas*, *Hymenæus*, *Philetus*, and others, were of this character; and multitudes more, in every succeeding age. When these persons fall; all the evidence, which convinced either themselves, or others, of their piety, is plainly proved to be unsolid; and we are naturally led to ask whether the evidence, on which *we* have relied, as the foundation of our own hope, be not the very same; or, if it is known to be different, whether we have reason to think it at all better. In this way, we naturally come to suspect the grounds, on which the belief of our piety has rested; and to doubt whether we are not equally deceived with *them*.

7thly. *I am of opinion, that God, for wise and good reasons, administers his Spiritual Providence in such a manner, as to leave his children destitute of the Faith of Assurance, for their own Good.*

This opinion, I am well aware, will most probably be doubted; although I entertain not a doubt of it, myself. It is proper therefore, that I should mention some reasons, which induce me to adopt it.

First. *It is perfectly plain, that the evidence, enjoyed by Christians concerning their piety, is in no regular manner, or degree, proportioned to their real excellence of character.* The proof of this position is complete, both from our own observation, and from the history of experimental and practical religion, given us in the lives of great multitudes of eminently good men. Such men, after having enjoyed, for a long time, the most consoling evidence of their good estate, have, through periods also long, been distressed with doubts and darkness, and sometimes with deep despondence; and have nevertheless afterwards obtained the same consolations throughout their remaining lives. To such seasons the Psalmist plainly alludes in many declarations, descriptions, and prayers. These are the seasons, in which *he speaks of God as hiding his face from him;* and of himself, as disquieted, troubled, sorrowful, mourning; as almost gone; as having his feet in the miry pit; and as overwhelmed by the billows of affliction.—Such seasons are, also, familiarly spoken of by Christians, as times of darkness and sorrow, in which the light of God's countenance is hidden from them.

Secondly. *There is not, I believe, a single promise in the Gospel, to Christians, as such, of the Faith of Assurance; nor any direct intimation, that they shall possess evidence of their piety, proportioned to the degree, in which it exists.* All the promises of this nature seem to be indefinite; and to indicate, that Christians shall enjoy *some evidence of this nature*, rather than to point out *the degree, in which it shall be enjoyed. The Spirit testifies with their spirits*, in a degree and manner accordant with his pleasure, *that they are children of God.* It is indeed said, that *if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.* But the word *know*, in this case, plainly means no other, than that he shall

have *a strong and satisfying persuasion:* for it cannot be said, that *knowledge*, in the proper sense, is ever attainable with regard to this subject. And this strong persuasion, that the Bible is the word of God, may exist without any satisfactory evidence that we are his children.

Thirdly. *There seems to be a plain and important reason, why most Christians should be left in some degree of uncertainty, concerning this subject.* In all the earlier ages of their piety, and in all other cases in which it is not eminently vigorous, they would be prone, if they possessed high consolatory evidence, especially if they possessed full assurance, of their renovation, imperfect as they then always are, to be at ease; to settle quietly down in that imperfect state; and in this manner to come far short of those religious attainments, which, now, they actually make; and perhaps finally to fall away. As the case now is, their fears serve to quicken them no less than their hopes: and by the influence of both they continue to advance in holiness to the end of life.

Fourthly. *The fact is, unquestionably, as I have stated it; and it cannot be rationally denied to be a part of the Spiritual Providence of God.*

REMARKS.

1st. *From these observations we learn the necessity of performing daily, and carefully, the duty of Self-examination.*

If such difficulties attend this duty; we are bound to exercise proportionally greater care, and exactness, in performing it.

2dly. *We are taught to rest our hopes on the general tenour of our dispositions and conduct, and not on particular views, affections, or actions.* These may be counterfeited; but to counterfeit the whole tenour of a life, seems impossible.

3dly. *We perceive the necessity of inquiring, particularly, whether we increase in holiness.* Evangelical holiness increases by its own nature, though irregularly. False religious affections by their nature decline at no very late periods.

4thly. *We learn the necessity of searching the Scriptures, continually, for that evidence, which alone is genuine, and on which alone we can safely rest.* In the Scriptures only, is this Evidence to be found.

5thly. *How conspicuous are the Wisdom and Goodness of God in causing the backslidings, and other defects of good men, to be recorded, for the instruction and consolation of Christians in all succeeding ages.* These evils, and the distresses and doubts which they occasion, attended *them*. Still they were truly pious. They may attend *us* therefore; while we may, nevertheless, be also subjects of piety.

6thly. *The same wisdom and goodness are still more conspicuous in the manner, in which the Psalms are written.* The Psalms are, chiefly, an account of the experimental religion of inspired men.

In this account, we find that many of them, particularly *David*, the principal writer, experienced all the doubts, difficulties, and sorrows, which are now suffered by good men. It is highly probable, that vast numbers of Christians have by these two means been preserved from final despondence.

7thly. *The subject, in its nature, furnishes strong, though indirect Consolation to Christians.* When they find doubts, and consequent distress, concerning their religious character, multiplied; they here see, that they *may be* thus multiplied, in perfect consistency with the fact, that they themselves are Christians; and are thus prevented from sinking into despair.

8thly. *We here learn the absolute necessity of betaking ourselves to God, in daily prayer, for his unerring guidance in this difficult path of duty.* If so many embarrassments attend this important employment; the assistance of the divine Spirit is plainly indispensable to our safety, and success. If this assistance be faithfully sought; we know, that it will be certainly granted.

9thly. *We here discern the goodness, manifested in that indispensable and glorious promise; I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* For creatures, struggling with so many difficulties to be *left at all*, would be inconceivably dangerous: *to be forsaken* would be fatal. But the divine presence, in the midst of all these, and even much greater dangers, furnishes complete and final safety to every Child of God.

SERMON XCI.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE LAW PERFECT.

PSALM XIX. 7.—*The Law of the Lord is perfect.*

IN the whole preceding series of discourses, I have examined with attention the principal DOCTRINES, contained in the Scriptures. Particularly, I have exhibited the Existence and Perfections of God, and his works of Creation and Providence; the Character and Circumstances of Man, both before and after his apostacy; and the Impossibility of his justification by his personal obedience. I have considered, at length, the Character and Mediation of Christ, and the Nature of Evangelical Justification through his righteousness; the Character and Agency of the Holy Ghost; the Necessity and Nature of Regeneration; its Antecedents, Attendants, Consequents, and Evidences. All these, united, constitute the body of those peculiarly important *Truths*, to which the Scriptures have required us to render our religious *Faith*.

The second great division of subjects, in such a system, is formed of the Scriptural PRECEPTS, requiring of us those internal, and external, acts, commonly termed *the Duty*, or *Duties*, of mankind. *We are not, however, to suppose, that Faith in the doctrines of the Scriptures is not itself a prime duty of man.* The contrary has, I trust, been amply proved. *Nor are we to suppose that any one of these doctrines has not, naturally, an important, practical influence on mankind.* The contrary to this, also, has, it is presumed, been extensively shown. Finally; *we are not to suppose, that Faith in Christ, and Repentance towards God, are duties of fallen beings, less real, less necessary, less essential, or less acceptable, than any other duties whatever.* The conformity of the understanding and the heart to every doctrine of the Scriptures is, by the authority of God, made equally a duty with obedience to every precept. All that can with propriety be said of this nature is, that those, which are customarily called the doctrines of the Scriptures, are *usually* presented to us rather in the form of Truths which we are to believe, than of Commands which we are to obey; and that the precepts are *commonly* given to us in their own proper form, requiring our obedience *directly*.

At the same time, it is to be observed, that *a conformity of our hearts, and lives, to the doctrines of the Gospel, is often expressly enjoined by the Scriptures.* To repent of our sins, and to believe in Christ, are the immediate objects of the great precepts of the Gospel. It is further to be observed, that *every Precept becomes,*

by a slight alteration in the phraseology, a Doctrine. For example, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*, is easily altered into a mere Truth, only by changing the phraseology into "It is right, or it is thy duty, to love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart." A cordial faith in this declaration is here, as with respect to every other precept, the spirit, whence is derived all genuine obedience.

Truth is commonly divided into that which is practical, and that which is speculative. But moral truth cannot, in the strict sense, be justly divided in this manner. Every moral truth is of a practical nature. Its influence, I acknowledge, is in some cases indirect; while in others it is direct. But it can never be truly denied, in any case, that its influence is really of this nature.

The observations, which I intend to make on the several subjects, included in the second great division of the system of theology, I propose to preface *with a general account of the Divine Law.* The doctrine, which I mean to discuss in this account, is that, which the text expresses in the very best terms, which can be chosen; viz.

THE LAW OF JEHOVAH IS PERFECT.

In proof of this truth I allege the following considerations.

1st. *The Law of God is the result of his Infinite Wisdom and Goodness.*

It cannot be supposed, that Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, would form a rule for the government of moral beings, which did not possess such attributes, as must render it a *perfect directory of their moral conduct.* It may easily be believed, that God may make moral beings, of many different classes: some of superior, and some of inferior, capacities: but it cannot be imagined, that he would not require of all such beings a character, and conduct, the best, of which they were *naturally* capable. Inferior wisdom and goodness might be unable to devise, or uninclined to require, the best conduct and character in moral creatures; or to point out the *means*, by which this character could be most easily and perfectly formed, or the *conduct*, in which it would most advantageously operate. But none of these things are attributable to infinite Wisdom and Goodness, thus employed. They, of course, must require the best character and conduct; must point out the best means of forming it, and the best modes in which it can operate. To suppose a law, which is the result of these attributes, not to be perfect, is to suppose, either that God did not know what would be the best character in his moral creatures, or did not choose to require it of them. Both parts of this alternative are too obviously absurd to need a refutation.

Further; A law is always the expression of the will of the lawgiver; and is, of course, an expression of his own character. This is pre-eminently applicable to the Law of God. In forming it, he was under no necessity, and could have no motive, beside

what is involved in his own pleasure, to induce him to form it in any given manner. The things, which it requires, are the things which he approves, and is seen to approve; the things, in which he delights, and is seen to delight; the things, therefore, which entirely show his real character. But the things, actually required, include all, which are due from his moral creatures to *Him*, to *each other*, and to *themselves;* or, in other words, all their internal and external moral conduct. But it cannot be supposed, that God would exhibit his own *perfect* character *imperfectly*, in a case of this magnitude. That, in a law, expressing thus his own character, and seen to express it; a law, from which they must of necessity learn his character more certainly, than from any thing else; a law, which regulated, and required, all the moral conduct ever required of them; he should not prescribe a perfect collection of rules; a collection absolutely perfect; is a supposition, amounting to nothing less than this: that in exhibiting his character to the Intelligent Universe he would present it in a false light; and lead them by a solemn act of his own, necessarily, to consider him either as a weak, or as an immoral, being.

2dly. *The Law of God is perfectly fitted to the State, and Capacity, of Intelligent Creatures.*

The divine Law is wholly included in two precepts: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself.* These are so *short*, as to be necessarily included in a single very short sentence; so *intelligible*, as to be understood by every moral being, who is capable of comprehending the meaning of the words, God and Neighbour: so *easily remembered*, as to render it impossible for them to escape from our memory, unless by wanton, criminal negligence of ours: and so *easily applicable to every case of moral action*, as not to be mistaken, unless through indisposition to obey. At the same time, *obedience to them is rendered perfectly obvious, and perfectly easy*, to every mind, which is not indisposed to obey them. The very disposition itself, if sincere and entire, is either entire obedience, or the unfailing means of that external conduct, by which the obedience is, in some cases, completed. *The disposition to obey, is also confined to a single affection of the heart*, easily distinguishable from all other affections: viz. *Love*. *Love*, saith *St. Paul, is the fulfilling of the Law.* The humblest and most ignorant moral creatures, therefore, are in this manner efficaciously preserved from mistaking their duty.

In the mean time, *these two precepts*, notwithstanding their brevity, *are so comprehensive*, as to include every possible moral action. The Archangel is not raised above their control; nor can any action of his exceed that bound which they prescribe. The Child, who has passed the verge of moral agency, is not placed beneath their regulation; and whatever virtue he may exercise is no other than a fulfilment of their requisitions. All the duties, which we immediately owe to God, to our fellow-creatures, and to

ourselves, are by these precepts alike comprehended, and required. In a word, endlessly various as moral action may be, it exists in no form, or instance, in which he who perfectly obeys these precepts, will not have done his duty, and will not find himself justified and accepted by God.

3dly. *The Law of God requires the best possible Moral Character.*

To require and accomplish this great object, an object in its importance literally immense, is supremely worthy of the wisdom and goodness of this glorious Being. To make his moral creatures virtuous is unquestionably the only method of rendering them really and extensively useful, and laying the only solid foundation for their enduring happiness. But all virtue is summed up in the fulfilment of these two Commands: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself.* In doing this, every individual becomes as amiable, excellent, dignified, and useful, as with his own capacity he can be. Should he advance in his capacity through endless duration, all the good, which he will ever do; all the honour, which he will ever render to his Creator; all the excellence, amiableness, and dignity, which he will ever acquire; will be nothing but obedience to these two commands. The beauty and glory of the Evangelical character; the rapturous flame which glows in the breast of a Seraph; the transcendent exaltation of an Archangel; is completely included in *loving God with all the heart, and his neighbour as himself.* Nay, the infinite loveliness, the supreme glory, of the Godhead, is no other than this disposition, boundlessly exerted in the Uncreated Mind, and producing, in an unlimited extent, and an eternal succession, its proper and divine effects on the Intelligent Universe. *God,* saith *St. John, is Love.*

4thly. *The Law of God proposes, and accomplishes, the best possible End.*

The only ultimate good is Happiness: by which I intend *Enjoyment;* whether springing from the mind itself, or flowing into it from external sources. Perfect happiness is perfect good; or, in other words, includes whatever is desirable: and this is the good, which the divine law proposes, as its own proper and supreme End.

This end is with exact propriety divisible, and is customarily divided, into two great parts: the first usually termed *the Glory of God:* the second, *the Happiness of the Intelligent Creation.*

The original, and essential, Glory of God is his Ability, and Disposition, to accomplish perfect happiness. This is his inherent, unchangeable, and eternal perfection. But the glory of God, to which I refer, is what is often called *his declarative glory;* and is no other than *this very perfection, manifested in his conduct, immediately by himself, and, mediately in their conduct, by the Intelligent Creation.* In this sense, the glory of God is proposed, and ac-

complished, by his Law, when he prescribes to his Intelligent Creatures, and produces in them, a disposition to *love Him with all the heart, and each other as themselves*. This disposition is, beyond all estimation, the most lovely, the most excellent, the most glorious, work of the Creator's hands; incomparably the greatest proof of his sufficiency, and inclination, to effectuate perfect good; and, therefore, infinitely honourable to his character. In the exercise of this disposition, on their part, and in its genuine effects, they render to him also, voluntarily, and directly, all the honour, which can be rendered to the Infinite Mind by Intelligent Creatures.

At the same time, *the divine Law is the source of perfect Happiness to them*. Voluntary beings are the only original sources of happiness: and *Virtue*, which is nothing but this disposition, is, in them, the only productive cause of happiness. Under the influence of it, all beings, in whom it prevails, unite to do the utmost good in their power. The good, therefore, which is actually done by them, is the greatest good which can be derived from the efforts of Intelligent Creatures. As in this manner they become perfectly lovely, praiseworthy, and rewardable, in the sight of God; he *can*, with the utmost propriety, and therefore certainly *will*, reward them, by actually communicating to them the most exalted happiness, of which they are capable. The kingdom of glory in the heavens, with its endless and perfect Providential dispensations, will, to Saints and Angels, constitute this reward.

I have mentioned *the Glory of God as the first great division of the perfect End, proposed by the divine law. The glory of God is that in which his happiness consists; the object, infinitely enjoyed by the Infinite Mind;* the Sufficiency for all good, not only existing, and enjoyed by contemplation, but operating, also, and enjoyed in its genuine and proper effects.

It ought to be observed, that there are no other possible means of accomplishing this illustrious end, beside this disposition. Intelligent beings are the only beings, by whom God can be thus glorified. They are the only beings who can understand, either his character or his works; or perceive the glory, which he directly manifests in them. They are, also, the only beings who can render to him love, reverence, or obedience; and thus honour his character in such a manner, as this can be done by creatures. Without them the Universe, with all its furniture and splendour, would still be a solitude.

At the same time, Intelligent beings alone either produce, or enjoy, happiness in any great degree.

But there is no other disposition in such beings, besides this, which can voluntarily glorify God, or produce important and enduring happiness. It is hardly necessary for me to observe, that no obedience, and no regard whatever, rendered by rational creatures to God, can be of any value, or in any degree amiable, or

acceptable, except that which is voluntary; or that towards beings who did not love him, he could not exercise any Complacency. It is scarcely more necessary to observe, that beings, who did not voluntarily produce happiness, could neither enjoy it themselves, nor yield it to others. The seat of happiness is the mind; and the first, or original happiness, which it finds, is ever found in its own approbation of its conduct, and the delightful nature of its affections. But no mind can be self-approved, which does not first love God and its fellow-creatures; and no affections can be delightful, except those which spring from the same disposition. *Its views of God, and its affections towards Him, its apprehensions of His complacency towards itself, and its enjoyment of his blessings; constitute the second great division of its happiness.* But no mind can have delightful views of God, or delightful affections towards him; or be the object of his complacency; except that which loves him supremely. *The third great division of this subject consists in the esteem, the love, and the kind offices, mutually interchanged by Rational beings.* It is perfectly obvious, that these can never exist in any material degree, where the second command of this law is not cordially obeyed. But the mind, influenced by *the love which is the fulfilling of the law*, is self-approved, approved by God, and approved by its fellow-creatures. All its affections, also, towards itself, its Creator, and the Intelligent Universe, are delightful. At the same time, all its actions are productive of glory to the Creator, and of good to his creation.

Thus the law of God, by laying hold on this single great principle, has directed the whole energy of the mind to the production of the best of all ends, in the best possible manner.

REMARKS.

From these observations it appears,

1st. *That the Law of God is, and must of necessity be, Unchangeable and Eternal.*

Our Saviour informs us, that *heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one jot, or one tittle, of the Law shall fail.* This declaration has, I presume, seemed extraordinary to every reader of the New Testament. To many it has, in all probability, appeared incredible. But, if I mistake not, these observations furnish us not only with ample evidence of its truth, but with ample reasons, why it should be true. A law, which is the result of infinite Wisdom and Goodness; which is perfectly fitted to the state, and capacity, of Intelligent Creatures; which requires the best possible Moral Character; which proposes and accomplishes the best possible End; and without which neither the Glory of God, nor the Happiness of the Intelligent Creation, could be established, or perpetuated; plainly cannot, and ought not to be changed. Were God to change it, he must change it for the worse; from a perfect law to an imperfect one. Whatever rule he should prescribe, in its place,

for the conduct of his moral creatures, must require something, which is wrong, or fail to require something, which is right. Neither of these could be just, or wise, or good. Nor could his Wisdom, Justice, or Goodness, be manifested, or even preserved, in the establishment of such a law; much less in annulling a perfect law, and substituting an imperfect one in its place. To give up this law would be to sacrifice his own glory, and the happiness of his Intelligent creation. These, united, constitute the very End, for which the heavens and the earth were made. In the case supposed, therefore, the heavens and the earth would exist to no purpose; that is, to no purpose worthy of Jehovah.

2dly. *This subject furnishes us with one affecting view of the Evil of Sin.*

Sin is a transgression of the Law: that is, Sin is the disposition of the heart, and the conduct of the life, directly opposed to what the Law requires. It is directly opposed to the decisions of infinite wisdom and goodness; to the best possible character; and to the best possible end: the glory of God, and the supreme good of the Intelligent Creation. Of all these the Law is either the transcript, or the indispensable means. So far as sin has power to operate, it operates to their destruction; and its native tendency would prevent the glory of God, and the good of the universe.

The evil of sin does not lie in the power of the sinner to accomplish his evil designs; but in the nature of the designs themselves, and the disposition which gave them birth; and must ever bear some general proportion to the extent of the mischief, which it would accomplish, if it were permitted to operate without restraint. From what has been said it is plain, that this mischief transcends all finite comprehension. The evil, therefore, which is inherent in it, must be incalculably great.

We see this truth verified in the present world. All the misery, suffered here, is the effect of sin. Sin blotted out the bliss of Paradise; and established in its place private wretchedness and public suffering. The smile of complacency it changed into the gloomy frown of wrath and malice. For the embrace of friendship it substituted the attack of the assassin. The song of joy it converted into a groan of anguish: the ascription of praise it commuted for the blasphemies of impiety. What then must be the evils, which it would accomplish, were it let loose upon the universe; were it to invade the kingdom of glory, as it once intruded into Eden; and ravage eternity, as it has ravaged the little periods of time.

3dly. *We learn from this subject the absurdity of Antinomianism.*

Two of the prominent Antinomian doctrines are, *that the Law of God is not a Rule of duty to Christians: and that the Transgressions of it by Christians are not sins.*

Sin, saith *St. John, is the transgression of the law.* It is a bold assertion, then; an assertion, demanding a warrant, which can be

pleaded by no man; that *there is such a thing, or that there can be such a thing, as a transgression of the law, which is not sinful.* Why are not the transgressions of Christians sinful? Is it because they are holy beings? *Adam* was perfectly holy: yet one transgression of his ruined the world. Angels were perfectly holy, in a state, far superior to that of *Adam:* yet one transgression of theirs turned them out of heaven! Is it because Christians are redeemed? The mercy of God, displayed in their redemption, only increases their obligation to obey, and therefore enhances every transgression. Is it because God has promised, that they shall persevere, and that they shall be saved? This promise is an exercise of divine Mercy; has exactly the *same* influence; and, in the case supposed, can produce no other effect. Why then, are the transgressions of Christians not sinful? To this question they will in vain search for an answer.

Why is the law no longer a rule of righteousness to Christians? Is it because they are no longer under its condemning sentence? For this very reason they are under increased obligations to obey its precepts. Is it because they are placed under a *better* rule, or a *worse* one? A better rule cannot exist: a worse, God would not prescribe. Are not Christians required to glorify God? Are they not bound to promote the happiness of each other, and their fellow-men? Are they not required to conform to the dictates of infinite Wisdom and Goodness; to sustain the best Moral Character; and to fulfil the true End of their being? *To love God with all the heart,* and *their neighbour as themselves,* is to do all these things, in the manner most pleasing, and in the only manner which is pleasing, to God.

To remove a Christian from the obligation, which he is under to obey the law of God, is to remove him from all obligation to perform any part of his duty, as a rational being to God, or to his fellow-creatures: for every part of this duty is required by the divine law. In other words, it is to discharge him from all obligation to be virtuous. What end must we then suppose Christians are intended to answer, while they continue in the world? Certainly, none worthy of God; none worthy of the mediation of Christ; none worthy of the Christian character.

Antinomians forget, that *he who is born of God, loveth God, and knoweth God; that he, who loveth not, knoweth not God; and that this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.* They forget, that Christ died *to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

4thly. *We are here furnished with one interesting proof of the Divine Revelation of the Scriptures.*

It is perfectly obvious to all who hear me, that a book, professing to be a Revelation, must, whether false or true, depend in a great measure on its own internal character for evidence of its divine origin. The things, which it contains, must be such, as be-

come the character of God. Many of them may be mysterious, and inexplicable; because the nature of the subjects may be such, as to transcend the human comprehension, or lie beyond the reach of human investigation. There are subjects, also, of which it may be necessary to know a part; and that part, though sufficiently disclosed, if considered *by itself* only, may yet be connected with others, whose existence it will indicate, but whose nature it will not at all disclose. When subjects of this kind are presented to us, we may, if we are disposed to inquire into them extensively, be easily perplexed, and easily lost.

But whatever is revealed must *consist with the character of God;* or it cannot be admitted as a Revelation. Some things also, contained in a real Revelation, must be plainly *worthy of their Author, and not, merely, not unworthy;* must be honourable to his character; superior to the discoveries of the human mind; and such, as cannot be reasonably believed to have been the inventions of men.

Perfectly correspondent with all these remarks is the Law, under contemplation. This truth will advantageously appear by a comparison of it with the most perfect human laws. I shall select for this purpose those of *Great Britain.*

The *statute laws* of that kingdom are contained, if I mistake not, in about eighteen or twenty folio, or about fifty octavo, volumes. The *common*, or as it is sometimes styled the *unwritten law*, occupies a number of volumes far greater. To understand them is a work of deep science; the employment of the first human talents; and the labour of a life. The great body of them can never be known by the generality of men; and must, therefore, be very imperfect rules of their conduct.

In the mean time, multitudes of cases are continually occurring, which they do not reach at all. Those, which they actually reach, they affect in many instances injuriously; and in many more, imperfectly. The system of happiness, which they propose, is extremely defective; a bare state of tolerable convenience; and even that, attended with many abatements. They also extend their influence only to a speck of earth, and a moment of time. Yet these laws were devised, reviewed, and amended, by persons of the first human consideration for learning and wisdom.

The Law, which *we* have been examining, is comprised in two commands only: is so short; so intelligible; so capable of being remembered, and applied, as to be perfectly fitted to the understanding, and use, of every Moral being. At the same time, it is so comprehensive, as to reach, perfectly, every possible moral action; to preclude every wrong, and to secure every right. It is equally fitted to men and angels, to earth and heaven. Its control extends with the same efficacy, and felicity, to all worlds, and to all periods. It governs the Universe; it reaches through Eternity. The system of happiness, proposed, and accomplished, by

it, is perfect, endless, and for ever progressive. Must not candour, must not prejudice itself, confess, with the Magicians of *Egypt*, that here *is the finger of God?*

But if this is from God, the Scriptures must be acknowledged to have the same origin. In the Scriptures alone is this Law contained. Nay, the Scriptures themselves are, chiefly, this Law, expanded into more minute precepts, and more multiplied applications; enforced by happy comments, and illustrated by useful examples; especially the Example presented to us in the perfect and glorious life of the Son of God.

SERMON XCII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.—LOVE TO GOD.

MARK xii. 28—30.—*And one of the Scribes came, and, having heard them reasoning together, and perceived that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the First Commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, the First of all the Commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: This is the First Commandment.*

IN the last discourse, I made a number of general observations on *the Perfection of the divine law.* I shall now proceed to consider, somewhat more particularly, *the Nature and Import of the First and Greatest Commandment of that Law; the Command, which regulates our Piety to God.*

In the text we are informed, that a Scribe, a Man learned in the Scriptures, and accustomed to expound them to others, pleased with Christ's refutation of the Sadducees, and the proofs which he had unanswerably given of a future existence, asked him, *Which is the first commandment of all?* that is, the first in rank, obligation, and importance. Christ, quoting Deut. vi. 4, informs him, that the first command, in this sense, is, *Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.*

In this command, it is to be observed, there is one thing only required; and that is *Love.* It is, however, *Love in a comprehensive sense;* including several exercises of the mind, easily, and customarily, distinguished from each other; as might, indeed, be naturally expected from the phraseology of the Command.

It is further to be observed, that the Love, here enjoined, is required to exist in such a degree, as to occupy the whole heart, the whole soul, the whole mind, and the whole strength. The word, here rendered *soul*, seems originally to have been used to denote *the principle of animal life*, and to have been commonly used in this sense by the *Greeks;* as the two corresponding words of their respective languages were by the *Jews* and *Romans.* The word, translated *mind*, is commonly used to denote the *understanding;* and seems plainly to have been used in this manner here; since the Scribe expresses this as the meaning of it in his answer. The import of this command may, then, be stated thus. *Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, with all thine understanding*, and *with all thy strength, throughout all thy life.* In other words, we are required, under the influence of this dis-

position, to devote, throughout our lives, all our faculties, and services, to the glory of Jehovah. Our hearts and voices, our understanding and our hands, are to be entirely, and voluntarily, dedicated to his service.

I have already observed, that *Love*, in this comprehensive sense, includes several exercises of the mind, easily and customarily distinguished. It will be one object of this discourse to exhibit them with this distinction.

1st. *Love to God, as required by this command, is Good-will to him, his designs, and interests.*

By *Good-will*, in this case, I intend the very same Benevolence, formerly described as one of the Attendants of Regeneration, and then mentioned as extending to the Creator and his intelligent creatures. Not a small number of divines have supposed, that Love, in this sense, is neither required, nor exerted, towards the Creator. "God," say they, "being supremely and eternally blessed; and the success of his designs, and the prosperity of his interests, being perfectly secured by his power, knowledge, and presence; there can be no necessity, nor room, for any exercise of our good-will towards *him*, or *them*. Benevolence is with propriety exercised towards Man, because he needs it; but cannot with any such propriety be exercised towards God, who is so far from *needing any thing*, that *he gives unto all life, and breath, and all things.*"

These observations are undoubtedly specious. Yet the reasoning, contained in them, is totally erroneous; and the conclusion, intended to be derived from them, false and mistaken. To admit it, is to give up the first duty of man.

Benevolence depends not, either for its obligation or exercise, on the supposition, that the person, towards whom it may be directed, needs either our benevolence, or its effects. Happiness, its immediate object, is always, and every where, supremely delightful and desirable in itself; delightful, whenever it exists; desirable, whenever it may exist hereafter. The greater the degree in which it exists, or may exist hereafter, the more delightful, the more desirable, must it be, of course. It is desirable, that two persons should be happy, other things being equal, rather than one; twenty than two; an hundred than twenty. It is in a continually increasing proportion desirable, that a person should be twice as happy, as he is at present; ten times; an hundred times. On the same grounds it is delightful to find happiness existing in one degree; more delightful in two; and still more in twenty, or an hundred. To delight in happiness, in this manner, is, in the same manner, to exercise good-will towards the being who is thus happy.

The *happiness*, or *blessedness*, *of God*, as it is more commonly termed, is no other, than *his Enjoyment of his own perfect Attributes, and of the effects, produced by them in that glorious system of*

good, which is begun in the *work of Creation, and will be completed in the work of Providence*: or, in other words, *his Sufficiency for accomplishing, the Certainty that he will accomplish, and the Actual accomplishment of, a perfect system of good.* This is an object, infinitely desirable to the Divine Mind. Were it to fail; this desire would be ungratified; and the Divine Mind would be proportionally unhappy.

To this it will be objected, as it often has been, that "*this doctrine makes God dependent for his happiness on his creatures.*"

This objection is a mistake. The doctrine involves no such dependence. The independence of God consists not at all in the fact, that he will be happy, whether his designs will be accomplished or not; but in his Sufficiency for the absolute accomplishment of them all; and in the absolute certainty, that they will be thus accomplished. His Power, Wisdom, and Godness are this sufficiency; and yield him intuitive certainty of this accomplishment. These things constitute the most perfect possible Independence.

Were God without desires; had he no choice, no pleasure; he could enjoy no happiness. Were he unable to fulfil his pleasure, or uncertain whether it would be fulfilled; he would be dependent. But, according to this statement, his happiness and his independence are both absolute.

The designs of God are infinitely desirable, because they involve the display of his infinite perfections, in their perfect exercise, and in the accomplishment of a perfect system of Good. In this manner they present to us the most glorious of all objects, operating in the most glorious manner to the production of the most glorious purpose. This object is, with the highest evidence, infinitely desirable and delightful. At the same time, the happiness, which God enjoys in the exercise of his perfections, and in the accomplishment of this divine End, is a happiness not only infinitely desirable and delightful to himself, but desirable in the same manner to all Intelligent creatures. All Intelligent creatures, possessed of real benevolence, cannot fail to rejoice, that God is, and ever will be, thus infinitely happy; that these glorious designs will certainly be accomplished; that he will ever thus act; and that he will ever find infinite enjoyment in thus acting. It is as truly desirable, that God should be thus happy, as it is that any of his Intelligent creatures should be happy; and as much more desirable, as he is happier than they.

But to delight in this happiness is to exercise towards God the benevolence of the Gospel. I flatter myself, that to exercise this benevolence has been amply proved to be an unquestionable and supreme duty of man.

2dly. *Love to God is Complacency in his Character.*

It has been shown in several former discourses, that God is infinitely benevolent; in other words, he is infinitely disposed to

desire, and perform, that which is good in the highest degree. In other words, he is infinitely just, faithful, true, kind, bountiful, and merciful. Such a character is infinitely excellent in itself; and demands in the highest possible degree, the supreme Approbation, and the supreme Complacency, of every Intelligent creature.

Benevolence, as here required, *is a delight in the Happiness of God: Complacency is a delight in his Excellence.* The Excellence of God contains in itself all that Wisdom can approve; all that Virtue can love; all that is meant by the excellence and amiableness, by the beauty and glory of Mind; by Moral dignity and greatness. This is what God himself esteems his own supreme perfection, and the transcendent glory of his character. Accordingly, when he proclaimed his *Name* to *Moses*, on Mount *Sinai*, he proclaimed this part of his character only; and styled it the Name, or Glory, of Jehovah.

I know not, that to love God, *in this sense*, has ever been denied, or doubted to be a Christian duty, by such as have believed in the Scriptures. On the contrary, it has been commonly supposed, that Complacency and Gratitude were the only love to God required in his Law. The happiness of God has usually been considered as so secure, so independent, and so perfect, as that, while he needs nothing from the hands of his creatures to increase or insure it, he also may be justly regarded as claiming nothing from *them*, with respect to this subject. His perfections, at the same time, are so manifest, and so absolute, as to fill the mind with reverence and amazement, and engross all its attention and thoughts. In this manner, probably, the regard of mankind, and even of wise and good men, has been so effectually drawn away from the consideration of the happiness of God to the consideration of his excellence, that they seem chiefly to have forgotten the former of these objects, and have been almost wholly occupied by the latter. At the same time, it cannot be denied, that to delight in the excellence of God is a duty *more obvious* to the mind, than to delight in his happiness. A little reflection will, however, convince us, and I hope it has already been clearly shown, that it is not a *more indispensable* duty. It is plainly not our original duty. It is plainly not Virtue, or Moral Excellence, *in the original sense*. *This* is, unquestionably, *the love of happiness*. *Complacency* is *the love of this Virtue*, or *moral excellence*. But that excellence must exist, before it can be loved. The contrary supposition is a palpable absurdity; to which all those reduce themselves, who insist *that Complacency is original virtue*.

3dly. *The Love of God is Gratitude.*

Gratitude is *love to God for the particular manifestations of his glorious character in his various kindness to us, and to ours*. *We*, and perhaps all other Intelligent beings, are so formed, as to be able more clearly to see, and more strongly to feel, blessings, im-

mediately bestowed on ourselves, and on those intimately connected with us, whose characters and wants, whose sorrows and joys, we peculiarly understand, and feel, than those bestowed on others. As we feel, universally, what is ours, and what pertains to our connexions, more, other things being equal, than what pertains to those, whose interests we less understand, and in whose concerns we are less in the habit of mingling; so we feel, of course, more deeply the blessings, which *we* and *they* receive; the deliverances, hopes, comforts, joys; than we do, or can, those of others. Our near connexions are our second selves; and there is sometimes as little difference, and sometimes even less, between us and them in our views and feelings, than between them and others. Nay, there are cases, in which we feel the interests of our connexions no less than our own. A parent would often willingly suffer the distresses of a child, in order to accomplish relief for him; and often rejoices more in his prosperity, than if it were his own.

There is, perhaps, no solid reason in the nature of things, why God should be loved more for the manifestation of goodness towards one being, than for the same manifestation towards another. Still, with our present dispositions, those acts of his benevolence which respect ourselves, will always, perhaps, appear more amiable than those which respect others.

Gratitude, therefore, or Love to God for the communications of blessings to ourselves, and to those in whose well-being we find a direct and peculiar interest, is an affection of the mind, in some respects distinct from Complacency; an affection, which must, and ought to exist in this world. As we can love God more for blessings thus bestowed, than for those bestowed on others; so we ought to seize every occasion to exercise this love, to the utmost of our power: and such occasions enable us to exercise it in a superior degree.

Possibly, in a future world, and a higher state of existence, all the blessings of God, communicated to rational beings, may affect us, as if communicated to ourselves; and our Complacency in his character may universally become possessed of the whole intenseness and ardour of Gratitude.

Gratitude, considered as a virtue, it is always to be remembered, *is Love, excited by kindness communicated, or believed to be communicated, with virtuous and good designs, and from good motives; not for kindness, bestowed for base and selfish ends.* In every case of this nature, the kindness, professed, is merely pretended, and hypocritical. The bestower terminates all his views in his own advantage; and has no ultimate regard to the benefit of the receiver.

The kindness of God is invariably communicated with the best of all designs, and motives; designs and motives infinitely good; and is, therefore, a display of a character infinitely excellent. Hence it is always to be regarded with Gratitude. The good be-

stowed is also the highest good; and therefore the highest Gratitude is due to the bestower.

Of precepts, requiring all these exercises of love, and prohibiting the want of them; of examples, by which they are gloriously illustrated; of motives, promises, and rewards, by which they are divinely encouraged; the Scriptures are full. Particularly, the *Good-will* of the Psalmist to the infinitely great and glorious Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, of the Universe, is manifested, every where, throughout his sacred songs. Every where he rejoices in the designs, and actions, of Jehovah; in the certain accomplishment of his designs; in the infinite glory, which he will derive from them all; in the prosperity of his kingdom; and in the joy, which he experiences in all the works of his hands.

Equally does he express his *Complacency* in the perfect character of God; his wisdom, power, goodness, truth, faithfulness, and mercy; as displayed in his works and word, in his law and Gospel.

Nor is he less abundant in his effusions of *Gratitude* for all the divine goodness to himself and his family to the people of *Israel* and the Church of God. In expressing these emotions, he is ardent, intense, sublime, and rapturous: an illustrious example to all, who have come after him, of the manner, in which we should feel, and in which we should express, our love to God.

Like him, the Prophet *Isaiah*, the Apostle *Paul*, and generally all the Scriptural writers, in works not directly devotional, but doctrinal and preceptive, exhibit, with corresponding ardour and sublimity, these most excellent dispositions. It is hardly necessary to add, that our own emotions, and expressions, ought to be of the same general nature.

Having thus exhibited, summarily, the Nature of Love to God, in these three great exercises, I will now proceed to allege several reasons, which demand of us these exercises of piety.

1st. *This service is highly reasonable, beautiful, and amiable, in Intelligent creatures.*

God, from the considerations mentioned in this discourse, presents to us in his blessedness, in his excellence, and in his communications of good, all possible reasons, in all possible degrees, why we should exercise towards him our supreme Benevolence, Complacency, and Gratitude. His enjoyment is the sum of all happiness; his character the sum of all perfection; and his communications of good the amount of all the blessings, found in the universe. These, united, constitute an object, assembling in itself, comparatively speaking, all natural and moral beauty, glory, and excellence; whatever can be desired, esteemed, or loved.

2dly. *God infinitely loves himself.*

The conduct of God is, in every case, the result of views and dispositions, perfectly wise, and just, and good, and becomes, wherever they can imitate it, a perfect rule to direct the conduct

of his Intelligent creatures. In this case, the rule is as perfect, as in any other: and in this case, as well as every other, it is the highest honour, and the consummate rectitude, of all Intelligent creatures, to resemble their Creator. So far as we resemble him, we are secure of being right, excellent, and lovely.

At the same time, so far as we are like him, we are assured of his approbation and love, and of receiving from his hands all the good, which our real interests require. As he loves himself; he cannot but love his resemblance, wherever it is found.

3dly. *In this conduct we unite with all virtuous beings.*

This is the very conduct, which especially constitutes them virtuous, and without which their virtue, *in every other sense*, would cease to exist. For this they love and approve themselves: for this they will approve and love us. By these exercises of piety, then, we become, at once, entirely, and for ever, members of their glorious assembly; secure of their esteem, friendship, and kind offices; and entitled, of course, to a participation of their divine and immortal enjoyment. The best friends, the most delightful companions, the most honourable connexions, which the universe contains, or will ever contain, are in this manner made ours throughout the ages of our endless being.

4thly. *We unite with God, and the virtuous universe, in voluntarily promoting that supreme good, which by his own perfections, and their instrumentality, he has begun to accomplish.*

This work is literally divine: the supreme, the only, display of divine excellence, which ever has been, or ever will be, made: an immense and eternal kingdom of virtue and happiness: all that wisdom can approve, or virtue desire. To engage in it, is to engage in the best of all employments. To choose it, is to exhibit the best of all characters. It is to choose what God himself chooses; to pursue, what he pursues; to act, as he acts; and to be *fellow-workers together with him* in the glorious edifice of eternal good. The disposition required in this command, is the same, which in him, and in all his virtuous creatures, originated, advances, and will complete, this divine building in its ever-growing stability, beauty, and splendour.

5thly. *We secure, and enjoy, the greatest happiness.*

Love to God is a disposition inestimably sweet and delightful: delightful in itself; delightful in its operations; delightful in its effects. All the exercises of it are in their own nature, and while they are passing, a series of exquisite enjoyments. They operate only to good; and are, therefore, highly pleasurable in all their various tendency. Their effects, both within and without the soul, are either pure, unmingled happiness, directly enjoyed by ourselves; or a similar happiness, first enjoyed by others, and then returning to ourselves with a doubly endeared and charming reversion.

This disposition leads us unceasingly to contemplate the most exalted, wonderful, and delightful objects; the things, which God has already done, is daily accomplishing, and has disclosed to us in his promises as hereafter to be accomplished. Contemplation on the works of God, when they are regarded as being his works, is capable of furnishing us with dignified and intense enjoyment. To produce this effect, however, it is indispensable, that we should view them under the influence of this disposition. The mind can experience no pleasure in contemplating the actions of a being, whom it does not love. Love to God opens the gates of enjoyment; and of all enjoyment, furnished by the works of creation and providence, so far as it springs from the consideration, that they are *his* work. Through this enjoyment it conducts the mind to others; and to others still, in a train which knows no end. Wherever we are, or can be, delighted with displays of boundless wisdom and boundless goodness, with the perfect efforts of a perfect character, Love to God is the guide which conducts us to the divine possession.

Beyond this, He, who created us for this glorious purpose, and who delights to see it accomplished, cannot fail to be pleased with us, while engaged in it; and, therefore, will not fail to reward us with his blessing. In this path, then, we ascend to the divine favour; *see the good of his chosen; enjoy the gladness of his nation;* and share *the glory of his inheritance.* Eternal glory, then, is the natural, the necessary, result of Love to God. Indeed, eternal glory is nothing but his eternal and unchangeable love to us, and our eternal and unchanging love to Him; united with the same love, extended, and reciprocated among all virtuous beings. In the world to come, this divine disposition will become more and more sweet and delightful; and in every mind, be, in the beautiful language of our Saviour, *a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life.*

6thly. *Without love to God, there can be no Virtue, or Moral Excellence.*

Love is a single character; uniform in its nature, and in no way separable, even in contemplation, except, merely, as it is exercised towards different objects. These give it all those, which are considered as its different forms. In all these forms it is exercised by the same man, in exactly the same manner. If it be found in one of these forms, in any mind, it is, of course, found in the same mind, in every other form, whenever the object, which gives it that form, is presented to that mind. Thus he, who possesses *Benevolence*, when *happiness* is the object present to him, exercises *Complacency* whenever he contemplates *Moral Excellence;* and *Gratitude*, whenever he turns his thoughts towards a *Benefactor.* Thus also, he, who loves God, loves his fellow-creatures of course; and, of course, governs himself with evangelical moderation and self-denial. In all these exercises of mind, and all others of a vir-

tuous nature, a single, indivisible disposition exists, and operates. This disposition is the Love, required by the divine law; *the Love*, which *St. Paul* declares to be *the fulfilling of the Law:* not Love, of various kinds; not a train of dispositions, diversified in their nature, and springing up, successively, as new objects are presented to the mind: but Love, of exactly the same nature, diversified only by being exercised towards different objects.

This disposition is the only real excellence of mind. There is no ultimate good, but happiness; and no disposition originally good, but that which rejoices in it, and voluntarily promotes it. Benevolence is, therefore, the only original excellence of mind; and is the foundation of all the real excellence of Complacency and Gratitude; which are only subordinate forms, or exercises, of the same character.

7thly. *A higher, nobler, state of being is enjoyed by him, who loves God, than can possibly be enjoyed by any other.*

God is the Origin, and Residence, of all that is great, or good, in the universe. All other greatness and goodness are mere emanations from the greatness and goodness of JEHOVAH. To have no delight in these glorious attributes, boundlessly existing in the Infinite Mind, is to be destitute of the noblest and best of all views and affections; of affections and views, fitted in their own nature to improve, ennoble, refine, and enrapture, the mind; and to form it into a most honourable resemblance to the Sum of all perfection. Without this disposition, we are sinners; enemies to God; spots in his kingdom; and nuisances to the universe: are debased, guilty, and hateful, here; and shall be endlessly guilty and miserable hereafter.

8thly. *In this manner we obey God.*

God, *whose we are, and whom we are bound to serve*, has been pleased to express his pleasure to the Intelligent universe in these two commands. He, who published them, is our Maker, our Preserver, and our Benefactor. We are his property; created by his hand; formed for his use; made for his glory. His right to dispose of us according to his pleasure is, therefore, supreme; and such as cannot be questioned. It is a right, of course, which, although so exercised, as to demand of us very great, and long-continued self-denial, is ever to be submissively, patiently, and cheerfully, acknowledged by us. Whatever God is pleased to require us to do, or to suffer, we are to do with delight, and suffer with absolute resignation. I do not mean, that we can be required, either with justice or propriety, to do, or to suffer, any thing which is unjust or wrong. To require this of Intelligent creatures, is literally impossible for a Mind infinitely perfect. But I mean, that whatever this perfect and great Being actually requires, we are absolutely bound to do, or suffer, in this manner.

At the same time, it is a source of unceasing satisfaction and delight, *to discern, from the nature of the subject itself, that all,*

which is actually required, is holy, just, and good; supremely honourable to Him, and supremely beneficial to his Intelligent creatures. This, I flatter myself, has been sufficiently shown in this and the preceding discourses. It is delightful, while we are employed in obeying God, to perceive immediately, that our conduct is in all respects desirable; the most desirable, the most amiable, the most delightful, of all possible conduct: in a word, the only conduct, which really deserves these epithets.

Obedience to a parent, possessed of peculiar wisdom and goodness, is, to every dutiful child, delightful in itself; not only, when the thing, required by him, is in its own nature pleasing; but also when it is indifferent, and even when it is difficult and painful.—The pleasure, enjoyed, is in a great measure independent of that which is done; and consists, primarily, in the delightful nature of those affections, which are exercised in obeying, and in the satisfaction of pleasing Him, whom we obey, by the respect and love, manifested in our obedience. The Parent of the universe is possessed of infinite wisdom and goodness. To please him, therefore, is supremely desirable and delightful. But the only conduct, in which we can possibly please him, is our obedience; and our only obedience is to *love him with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.*

Thus, whether we regard *ourselves*, and wish to be virtuous, excellent, honourable, and happy; or whether we regard *our fellow-creatures*, and wish to render them happy; to unite with them in a pure and eternal friendship; to receive unceasingly their esteem and kind offices; and to add our efforts to theirs for the promotion of the universal good; or whether we regard God; and desire to obey, to please, and to glorify Him; to coincide voluntarily with the designs, formed by his boundless wisdom and goodness; and to advance with our own cordial exertions the divine and immortal ends, which he is accomplishing; we shall make it our chief object to *love the Lord, our God, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and with all the understanding.*

SERMON XCIII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.—REVERENCE OF GOD.

Job xxviii. 28.—*And unto man he said, The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*

IN the last discourse, I examined *the Nature of Love to God*, as manifested in those three great exercises of it, which are commonly spoken of under this name: viz. *Benevolence*, *Complacency*, and *Gratitude*. I shall now consider another exercise of this affection, of sufficient magnitude to claim a particular discussion in a system of Theology. This is *Reverence to the same glorious Being*.

The Context is an eulogium on *Wisdom;* uttered in the noblest spirit of poetry. After describing, in a variety of particulars, the surprising effects of human ingenuity, and declaring, that, extraordinary as these may seem, the ingenuity, which has produced them, is utterly insufficient to discover the nature of this glorious attainment; *Job* asserts its value to be greater than any, and than all, the most precious things, which this world contains. In this state of human insufficiency, he informs us, God was pleased to interfere, and by a direct Revelation to declare to man, that *the fear of the Lord is Wisdom, and to depart from evil is Understanding*.

By *Wisdom*, throughout the Scriptures, in the common language of such men as understand the meaning of their own language, is universally intended *that Conduct, in which the best Means are selected to accomplish the best Ends;* or *the Spirit, which chooses these Ends, and selects these Means for their accomplishment*. In *the former case*, the name refers to the *Conduct only; in the latter*, to *the Character*. The best of all Ends, which it is possible for Intelligent creatures to pursue, is the combined and perfectly coincident one of glorifying God, and promoting the good of the universe. The Spirit, with which this is done in the only effectual manner, is that, which is here styled *the Fear of the Lord*. The Means, by which it is done, are partly the Spirit itself, in its various exercises and operations; and partly extraneous Means, devised, and employed, by the same Spirit.

A subordinate, but still very important, end, which is, or ought to be, proposed to himself by every Intelligent creature, and for which the most efficacious means ought to be employed by him, is

his own Eternal Happiness. The Fear of the Lord is equally *Wisdom*, in this view; as being the only disposition, which can either be happy in itself, or receive its proper reward from God.

Every person, who has read the Scriptures of the Old Testament, must have observed, that this phrase, *the Fear of the Lord*, and others substantially involving the same words, as well as the same meaning, are oftener used to denote the moral character, which is acceptable to God, than any, perhaps than all, other phrases whatever. It must, also, have struck every such reader, that this phrase is often used to denote all moral excellence; particularly, that supreme branch of this excellence, which is denominated Piety. This is plainly the drift of the text; and of many other corresponding passages of Scripture. Thus it is said, *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning*, or the chief part, *of Wisdom.* Psalm cxi. 10. *The Fear of the Lord is a fountain of life.* Prov. xiv. 27. *The Fear of the Lord is his treasure.* Is. xxxiii. 6. In these, and a multitude of other, declarations, of a similar import, it is plainly indicated, that *the Fear of the Lord* is the sum, and substance, of that morally excellent character, which is the object of the divine complacency.

It must, at the same time, be equally obvious to every attentive reader of the Bible, that *Love to God* has, there, exactly the same character: being, in the language of *St. Paul, the fulfilling of the law;* and in that of *St. John*, the same thing, as *being born of God and knowing God;* in the sense, in which such knowledge is declared by our Saviour to be *life eternal.*

But there are not *two distinct moral characters*, severally thus excellent; thus the objects of the divine complacency, and the foundations of eternal life. Moral excellence is *one thing;* and moral beings have but *one character*, which recommends them to God. As this is thus differently spoken of under the names of *the Love of God*, and *the Fear of God*, both in the Old and New Testament; it is sufficiently evident to a mind, even slightly attentive, that *the Fear of God*, and *Love of God*, are but one character, appearing under different modifications. Accordingly saints, or holy persons, are spoken of sometimes as those who fear God, and sometimes as those who love God: each of these exercises being considered as involving the other; and both, as parts only of one character.

That this view of the subject is perfectly just, is easily explained by a consideration of its Nature. There are two totally distinct exercises, which in the Scriptures, as well as in common language, are denoted by Fearing God; which may be called *Dread*, and *Reverence.* The former of these emotions is that, which is experienced by men, conscious of their guilt, feeling that they have merited the anger of God, and realizing the danger of suffering from his hand the punishment of their sins. In *this* it is plain, that there can be no moral excellence. All that can be said in

favour of it is, that it may serve as a check to sin; and prove, among other means, useful to bring sinners to repentance. In itself it is mere terror; and in the language of the Scriptures only makes us *subject to bondage*. The latter of these emotions is a compound of Fear and love, usually styled Reverence; and is often that exercise of the mind, in which its whole attachment is exerted towards God. *Fear*, in this sense, is *a strong apprehension of the greatness, and the purity, of God, excited in the mind of a person, who loves him supremely*. A lively example of a similar emotion is presented to us by the reverence, with which a dutiful child regards a highly respected Earthly Parent. Accordingly, the fear of God, in this sense, is commonly styled *filial;* in the former sense, it is often termed *servile* or *slavish;* as being of the same nature with the dread, which a mercenary servant stands in of an imperious master.

It is perfectly evident, that the distinction between these two emotions is founded entirely on the character of those, by whom they are severally exercised. Reverence to God is experienced only by those who love him; and is plainly the fear, exercised by an affectionate mind only. Were Love the only character of the mind, Dread could not possibly find a place in it. *There is no fear in love*, says *St. John; but perfect love casteth out fear. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.* As Christians in this world are not made perfect in love; the fear, spoken of in this passage, viz. that which I have called *dread*, is, in greater or less degrees, experienced by *them*. Wicked men are incapable of reverencing God; and only feel a dread of his anger and of punishment.

The Reverence, which is the immediate subject of consideration, ordinarily exists in the mind of a good man, whenever his contemplations are turned towards the Creator, or towards those objects, which are peculiarly his and in which he is peculiarly seen. *It is a steady, solemn, and delightful awe, excited in the mind by every view which it takes of the perfections, and operations of this great and glorious Being.* In our contemplations, on his Character, He himself becomes *immediately* the object of our thoughts. In all other cases we see him through the *medium* of his works, his word, or his ordinances. In all these, and in these alone, are we able to discern his real character. In all these we behold him awfully great, and wise, and good. *In his Works*, we are witnesses of that boundless benevolence which chose, that boundless knowledge which contrived, and that boundless power which produced, their existence; all of them seen, daily, in every place, and in every object. It is impossible for the mind, which is not totally destitute of Piety, to behold the sublime, the awful, the amazing, works of Creation and Providence; the heavens with their luminaries, the mountains, the ocean, the storm, the earthquake, and the volcano: the circuit of the seasons, and the revolutions of empire; without marking in them all the mighty

hand of God, and feeling strong emotions of Reverence towards the Author of these stupendous works. At some of them all men tremble: at others all men are astonished. But the sanctified mind, while it is affected in the same manner, blends its fear with love; and mingles delight even with its apprehensions; is serene amid the convulsions, which only terrify others; and encouraged, while all around are overwhelmed with dismay.

In the Word of God, these attributes are, in some respects, exhibited in a still more affecting manner. Here, the designs of this awful Being are unfolded, and his works presented, to us, as a vast system of means, operating in a perfect manner to the production of the most divine and glorious ends. Here, the pure and perfect Rectitude of the Creator, his unlimited Wisdom, and overflowing Goodness, are still more divinely manifested in the Law, by which he governs the universe, and in the scheme of restoring mankind to holiness by the Redemption of his Son, disclosed to us in the Gospel. The boundless nature of these things invests them with a magnificence and sublimity, wonderfully increasing the Reverence, excited by the things themselves; but nothing seems to me more fitted to awaken this emotion, than a sense of that spotless purity, in the view of which *the heavens are unclean, and the angels chargeable with folly.* In the solemn contemplation of this awfully amiable attribute, it seems difficult to forbear exclaiming, *What is man, who drinketh iniquity like water?* The same emotion, mingled with stronger feelings of alarm, is produced, also, by a contemplation of those amazing events, which are proclaimed by the voice of prophecy concerning the future destination of man: the Conflagration, the Judgment, and the Retributions of the righteous and the wicked.

In the Ordinances of Religion, the very same things are presented to the view of the mind, which so deeply affect it in the Works, and especially in the Word of God; and are presented to us in a manner peculiarly interesting. Here, we in a peculiar manner draw nigh to God; and apply to ourselves, with unrivalled force, the great, the awful, and the glorious things, which excite our Reverence. They are, of course, all seen in the clearest light; and felt with the deepest impression. Our Reverence, therefore, is apt to be here felt in a peculiar degree; not a little enhanced by the sympathy, exercised by multitudes feeling the same impression.

No affection of the mind is more useful than this; especially, when it has become so invigorated by habit, as to mingle itself with all our thoughts and feelings. It cannot but be advantageous to mention, particularly, some of the happy consequences, which it regularly produces. As a preface to this subject, it will, however, be proper to observe, generally, that habitual Reverence to God may be justly regarded as being, peculiarly, the spirit, with which his commandments are scrupulously and faithfully obeyed. *Fear God*, saith *Solomon, and keep his commandments: for this is the*

whole duty of man: or, in the better language of *Hodgson's* Version, *this is all that concerneth man.* Here we have presented to us the two great parts of human duty; our active obedience, and the spirit with which we obey. This spirit is announced by him to be Reverence. He does not say, *Love God, and keep his commandments;* but gives this all-comprehensive injunction in what seems to me very evidently better language. If we suppose ourselves to love God, without fearing him; I have no hesitation in saying, we should not keep his commandments, while possessed of our present imperfection, either to such an extent, or with such exactness, as we now do when under the government of evangelical Reverence. Reverence adds new motives of obedience to those, which are presented by love, considered by itself: Motives pre-eminently powerful and extensive; reaching the heart immediately; and extending to all persons, occasions, and times. Hence it becomes a most powerful prompter to universal obedience: and, although love is the disposition, which renders this emotion excellent; and although the emotion itself is only one modification of love; yet, in my own view, and if I mistake not, in the view of the Scriptures also, it is, at least in such beings as men are, a more energetic principle, than mere love, existing, as it actually does exist in human minds. Hence, after so much solemn preparation in the context, God declares in the text, *The Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom.* Hence, *St. Paul* says to the *Corinthians, Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, and of the spirit; perfecting holiness in the Fear of God.* In this passage it is evident, that, in the view of St. Paul, *the Fear of God* is the primary means of advancing personal holiness to perfection. It is in this view also, that the Prophet *Isaiah* declares *the Fear of the Lord to be his treasure;* the attribute, which, in man, he especially prizes, and in which he peculiarly delights.

These observations concerning the general influence of this attribute are sufficient for the present purpose. I shall now, therefore, proceed to mention its particular influence on the Christian life.

1st. *Religious Reverence has a peculiar tendency to render our worship acceptable to God.*

Wherefore, says *St. Paul, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve him acceptably with reverence and godly fear.* In this passage, the grace of God is exhibited to us as the cause, which enables us to worship God acceptably; and Reverence and godly Fear, two names for the same disposition, as the spirit, with which acceptable worship is performed. "By this spirit," says *Dr. Owen,* "the soul is moved and excited to spiritual care and diligence, not to provoke so great, so holy, and so jealous, a God by a neglect of that exercise of grace, he requires in his service, which is due to him on account of his glorious excellencies."

In accordance with this representation of the Apostle, the Psalmist says, Ps. v. 7, *As for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.* Our Saviour also, speaking in the 22d Psalm, says, *Ye that fear the Lord praise him; all ye seed of Jacob glorify him, and fear him all ye seed of Israel.* In the former of these passages, the Psalmist under the influence of inspiration teaches us that the Fear of God is pre-eminently the spirit with which he would choose to perform his worship in the temple; and the spirit, of course, which he knew would render that worship acceptable to God. In the latter of these passages, our Saviour mentions those, who fear God, as the proper persons to be employed in his praise; and teaches us therefore, that this is the spirit, with which alone men are becomingly occupied in this solemn and delightful act of worship. At the close of the verse, he exhibits those, who fear God, as the persons who glorify him.

A prime part of the character, given of *Job*, is that he feared God. Perhaps, this may be alleged as the true reason, why his prayers for his three friends were accepted on their behalf: for we find him immediately before, humbling himself in the presence of God with expressions of the most profound Reverence. *Cornelius*, also, seems to have had *his prayers*, as well as *his alms, accepted*, because *he feared God.* A much stronger instance than these; the strongest indeed, which can be supposed; is given us in Heb. v. 7, where it is said of Christ, *Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death; and was heard, in that he feared.* If this translation of the passage be admitted, as the natural meaning of the words requires; and as, notwithstanding the opinion of several commentators, seems reasonable; we are here taught, that even Christ himself, on the great occasion referred to, was heard on account of the Reverence, with which his supplications were presented. Perhaps this extraordinary declaration was made, especially to teach us, that without religious Reverence no prayer can be accepted of God; and thus to render us peculiarly careful not to approach the throne of grace without emotions in a high degree reverential.

I will only add to these observations from the Scriptures, that a great part of the worship, transcribed in them from the mouths of pious men, consists in reverential sentiments and expressions.

What the Scriptures thus teach is perfectly accordant with the dictates of our Reason. No views, no emotions, in us, can be supposed to become the worship of God, which are not either directly reverential, or such as flow from a generally reverential state of mind. If we remember how great a Being God is; that he is Self-existent and Independent; that he is Almighty and Omnipresent; that *he searches the hearts and tries the reins;* that *he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon sinners*

but with abhorrence; if we think, at the same time, how dependent we are upon him; how little we are; how guilty; how exposed to his anger; how imperfect in our best services; and how undeserving of any acceptance: if we remember, that *he is*, and that *there is none beside him;* and that not only *we*, but *all nations are as nothing before him;* that he is *glorious in holiness, fearful in praises*, and transcendently awful in his purity: it cannot be possible for us to avoid feeling, that no thoughts, affections, or conduct, can become those who worship him, but such as are accompanied by solemn awe, and profound Reverence for his perfect character; that, as *his name is Holy and Reverend*, so his worship should be ever celebrated with *godly Fear.*

2dly. *Religious Reverence is peculiarly the means of exciting, and keeping alive, an abhorrence of sin.*

The Fear of the Lord, says *Solomon*, or rather Christ, speaking by *Solomon, is to hate evil;* Prov. viii. 13: that is, it is a part of the very nature of religious Reverence to hate evil. *The transgression of the wicked saith in my heart, there is no fear of God before his eyes.* In this passage the Psalmist declares, that *the transgression of the wicked* proved to his satisfaction, that there was *no fear of God before his eyes.* Why? Plainly, because the wicked, if he feared God, would cease to transgress. Of *Job* it is said, *He feared God, and eschewed evil.* In this passage we are directly taught, that he eschewed evil because he feared God. After God appeared to him with awful glory and majesty, his views of the hatefulness and vileness of his sins were exceedingly enhanced by the clear apprehensions, which he entertained of the supreme greatness and excellency of his Maker. His reverential awe of God on the one hand, and his abhorrence of himself and his sins on the other, are very forcibly exhibited in his own language. *Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

It hardly needs to be observed, that nothing can impress on our minds the odiousness of sin in such a manner, as clear and affecting views of the Purity of Jehovah, and the Reverence for him, with which these views are attended; or, in better language, of which these views constitute an essential part. So entirely are mankind, at least those of them who speak our language, sensible of this; that, in judicial processes against criminals, the law constantly assigns as a primary cause of their commission of crimes, *that they had not the fear of God before their eyes.* This is the strongest of all human testimony, that the Fear of God is the great and controlling cause of hating and abstaining from iniquity. Of course,

3dly. *Religious Reverence is the great source of Reformation.*

The Fear of the Lord, says *Solomon*, *is to hate evil.* Prov. viii. 13. In this declaration we are taught, that Reverence to God is so extensively the cause of departing from evil, that it was proper, in the view of the Spirit of God, to declare it to be the same thing with *departure from evil.* Substantially in the same manner is this truth exhibited in the text; where *the Fear of the Lord* is declared to be *Wisdom*, and *departure from evil Understanding.* By *wisdom* and *understanding*, here, it is scarcely necessary to say, the same thing is intended: and this, in the former part of the verse, is declared to be *the Fear of the Lord;* and in the latter, *Departure from evil. Fear the Lord*, says Solomon to his Son, Prov. iii. 7, *and depart from evil.* And again, Prov. xiv. 27, *The Fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.* And again, in language somewhat different, Prov. xiii. 14, *The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.* Here religious Reverence, styled in the former passage *the fear of the Lord*, and in the latter *the law of the wise*, is declared to be *a fountain of life;* sending forth unceasing streams, of which he who drinks, will be both enabled, and inclined, *to depart from the snares of death:* that is, from sins, which are fatal snares to all who practise them.

But to depart from evil is, necessarily, to do good. Moral beings are by their nature always employed in obedience, or disobedience. He therefore, who *ceases to do evil*, invariably *learns to do well;* is invariably employed in the great business of reforming his life, and endeavouring to glorify his Creator.

4thly. *Religious Reverence is peculiarly the source of rectitude in our dispositions, and conduct, towards mankind.*

There was, saith our Saviour, *in a certain city, a judge, who neither feared God, nor regarded man.* This account of the subject is metaphysically, and universally, just. He, who does not fear God, will not regard man in any such manner, as reason acknowledges to consist with moral rectitude, and as all men declare to be due from man to man. He may indeed, like the unjust judge in this parable, for the sake of freeing himself from importunity and trouble, for the sake of reputation, convenience, gain, or some other selfish object, act with propriety in his external conduct; but he will never possess any real rectitude, and cannot therefore act under its influence.

When *Jehoshaphat* set Judges in the land, he said unto them, *Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord; who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore, now, let the Fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed, and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God; nor respect of persons; nor taking of gifts.* These are obviously the best rules ever given to judicial officers for the direction of their moral conduct; and such judges, and such rulers, as have accorded with them, have undoubtedly been

the best, when prejudice has not operated in a peculiar manner, which the world has ever seen. In all these, the Fear of God was the controlling principle. Concerning those rulers, whose conduct is recorded in the Scriptures, the subject does not admit of a doubt: for the divine writers have marked each case so strongly, as to put it wholly out of question. Concerning such men, as *Moses*, *Samuel*, *Josiah*, and *Nehemiah*, no man is at a loss. There is as little uncertainty concerning *Alfred the Great*, *Sir Matthew Hale*, and many others, in later times. All these, and all other men of a similar character, were supremely controlled in their conduct by the Fear of God; the great thing insisted on by *Jehoshaphat* in these directions.

Nehemiah, particularly, informs us concerning this subject, as it respected himself. *The former Governors*, says he, *who have been before me, were chargeable unto the people; and had taken of them bread and wine; besides forty shekels; Yea, even their Servants bear rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the Fear of God.*

Of *Hananiah*, the Ruler of the Palace, this eminently worthy man says, chapter vii. 2, that *he gave him charge over Jerusalem, because he was a faithful man, and feared God above many.* Of *Cornelius* it is said, *he feared God, and gave much alms to the people.* Of *Obadiah*, the governor of *Ahab's* house, it is declared, that *he feared the Lord greatly; and that he had thus feared him from his youth.* As a proof, as well as consequence, of this spirit, we are informed, that, when *Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, he took an hundred and fifty of them*, and *hid them in caves; where he kept, and fed them*, at the daily hazard of his life. By *St. Paul*, religious Reverence is alleged as the ground, and directory, of Christian submission to lawful authority, Eph. v. 21; and by *Malachi*, chapter iii. 16, as the cause of Christian fellowship.

Thus we find this spirit extending its benign influence to the various branches of Christian duty; and proving a peculiarly efficacious cause of zeal, and exemplariness, in all those parts of a religious life, which contribute, immediately, to the well-being of our fellow-men.

5thly. *Religious Reverence is the foundation of peculiar Blessings to the present world.*

The secret of the Lord, says the Psalmist, *is with them that fear him.* Ps. xxv. 14. *He hath given meat to them that fear him.* Ps. cxi. 5. *There is no want to them that fear him.* Ps. xxxiv. 9. *By the fear of the Lord are riches and honour.* Prov xxii. 4. *The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him.* Ps. xxxiv. 7. *He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him.* Ps. cxlv. 19. These promises, and these declarations, furnish complete security to those who fear God, that they shall really *want no good thing:*

that their circumstances shall be so ordered, as that *all things shall work together for their good.* They may indeed be troubled, and persecuted, and even cut off by a violent death. But these evils will take place, only when they become necessary; and when they themselves, as well as others, will become more happy, in the end, by means of them, than they could be without them.—Ordinarily, they will find, in times both of adversity and prosperity, ways, and those very numerous, in which God will show himself more attentive to their real good, than they themselves were; and, even in this life, will often see, that the most untoward events, as they seemed while passing, are such as they themselves, while taking a retrospective view, would choose to have had befal them. At the same time, all their enjoyments are *blessings;* and not, like those of the wicked, *enjoyments merely.* At the same time also, while the sufferings of the wicked are punishments and curses, the afflictions of such as fear God are only blessings in disguise.

6thly. *Religious Reverence is especially the means of securing eternal life.*

Surely, saith the Psalmist, *his salvation is nigh to them that fear him.* Ps. lxxxv. 9. *I know*, saith *Solomon, it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him. But it shall not be well with the wicked, because he feareth not before God.* Eccles. viii. 12, 13. And again; *The Fear of the Lord tendeth to life.* Prov. xix. 23. And again; *The Fear of the Lord is a fountain of life;* and to sum up all in a single declaration, *The wicked* are declared by Christ in the character of Wisdom, Prov. i. 29, to be finally given over to destruction *because they hated knowledge, and did not choose the Fear of the Lord.* But it is unnecessary to spend time, any further, in illustrating a doctrine, which necessarily follows from the observations, made under the preceding heads.

REMARKS.

From these observations Christians are taught,

1st. *The supreme Importance of the Fear of God.*

This affection is indispensable to the acceptableness of their worship, and their obedience; to their hatred of sin; their safety in temptation; and the amendment of their lives. It is a primary ingredient of their piety. It is the well-spring of their benevolence, justice, faithfulness, and brotherly love; of rectitude in them, when rulers; of submission, good order, and public spirit, when subjects. It is indispensable to their enjoyment of the favour of God in this life, and his everlasting kindness in the life to come. Higher motives to the attainment of any character cannot be alleged. Let every Christian, then, cherish and cultivate religious Reverence in his own mind. Let him often, and habitually, bring before his eyes the awful Being, who is the only object of

this affection, and whose sole prerogative it is to demand it of his creatures. Let him fasten his views on the presence and greatness, the purity and glory, of Jehovah; and solemnly discern, and confess, that he himself *is nothing, less than nothing, and vanity.* In the incommunicable splendour, in the incomprehensible majesty, of the Uncreated Mind, all created glory is lost and forgotten. In the presence of the Sun of Righteousness every star hides its diminished head. Before his beams the lustre of angels, and archangels, fades into nothing. In the presence of his purity *the heavens* themselves, spotless as they are to a created eye, *are unclean. What then is man, that God should be mindful of him; or the son of man, that he should visit him?* What indeed are we; what indeed must we be; in the presence of such a being as this?

Such thoughts as these ought ever to be present in the mind. Whenever it turns its views towards the Creator, those views ought, from motives of interest and duty alike, to be, invariably, of the most reverential kind. They most become the character of God; are eminently pleasing in his sight; constitute the best and happiest frame of mind; and most advantageously influence us in all our duty.

2dly. *From these observations it is clear, that habitual Reverence to God is one of the best Evidences of Piety.*

After what has been said, this truth needs no further illustration. All that is necessary to add is, that we are bound to examine ourselves accordingly.

3dly. *As Reverence to God is the most profitable, so Irreverence is the most dangerous, habit, which can easily be conceived.*

As I shall have occasion to dwell particularly on this subject, when I come to consider the third command in the decalogue; I shall not dwell upon it here. It is sufficient to observe at the present time, that every person, who is the subject of this character, ought to tremble at the danger, to which he is daily exposing himself. There is no manner, in which he can more effectually harden his own heart, or provoke the anger of God.

4thly. *He, who does not reverence God habitually, is here taught, that he is wholly destitute of religion.*

There is a state of mind, in such persons especially as have been taught to fear God from the morning of life, and have retained a strong influence of these impressions, which it is often difficult to distinguish from evangelical Reverence. But there is also a state of mind very extensively existing, which is wholly destitute of this attribute, and which, if examined with an ordinary degree of honesty and candour, may be easily discerned. No infidel, no profane person, no mere sensualist, or worldling, needs to hesitate, for a moment, in determining that he is destitute of Reverence to God, and consequently of Religion. Of course, he ought to

regard himself as plainly an object of divine wrath; and, so far as he has hitherto lived, an acknowledged heir of perdition. *The fear of God is a fountain of life.* Irreverence to him is a well-spring of everlasting death. Let every irreverent man remember therefore, that, to such as he is, *God is a consuming fire.*

I have dwelt more minutely and extensively on this great subject of Religion, because of its inherent importance, and because it is, I think unhappily, a rare topic of discussion from the desk.

SERMON XCIV.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.—HUMILITY.

1 PETER v. 5.—*Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

IN the preceding discourse I considered, at some length, that exercise of love to God which is styled *Reverence*. I will now proceed to examine the kindred virtue of *Humility*, an attribute which seems to differ from Reverence not so much in its nature as in its object. God is the object of reverence; ourselves, of humility. The state of the mind in the exercise of these Christian graces seems to be the same. It is hardly possible that he, who is now employed in reverencing his Maker, when casting his eye towards himself, should fail of being deeply humbled by a view of his own circumstances and character.

Before I enter upon this examination, however, it will be proper to observe, that there are other modes in which love to God is exerted; and which, although not demanding a particular discussion here, are yet of high importance, and well deserve to be mentioned. They deserve to be mentioned because of their importance. The reasons why they do not claim a particular discussion are, that more time would be demanded by it, than can well be spared from the examination of such subjects as require a more minute attention; and that they may be sufficiently understood from the observations made on the other exercises of piety.

Among these, the first place is naturally due to *Admiration*. By this I mean *the train of emotions, excited in a good mind by the wonderful nature of the various works of God, and the amazing power, and skill, and goodness, which they unfold. God*, saith Eliphaz, Job v. 9, *doth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number*. These things, we find good men, distinguished in the Scriptures for their piety, observing, and commemorating, with a transport of Admiration. *Oh sing unto the Lord*, says David, *for he hath done marvellous things. I will shew forth all thy marvellous works. Surely I will remember thy wonders of old. How great are his signs*, says *Nebuchadnezzar*, speaking at least the language of a good man, *how mighty are his wonders!* What they felt, they called upon others to feel. *Remember*, says David, *his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth*. 1 Chron. xvi. 12. *Declare his glory among*

the heathen; his wonders among the people. Ps. xcvi. 3. *Oh give thanks to the Lord of lords, who alone doeth great wonders; for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Admiration is a combined exercise of the mind; and is formed of wonder and complacency. It is an exercise eminently delightful; and is every where presented with objects to awaken it. Both Creation and Providence are full of wonders, presented to us at every moment, and at every step. Every attribute of God is fitted to excite this emotion by the amazing degree in which it exists; and by the degree also, in which it is very often displayed. Thus the Psalmist speaks of the *marvellous loving-kindness of God; St. Peter*, of his *marvellous light.* King *Darius* says, *He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and earth.* Thus *David* says, *I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* Thus one of the Names of Christ, whose Redemption is the most marvellous of all the works of God, is *Wonderful.*

It is to be observed that *Religious Admiration* is entirely distinguished from *wonder in the ordinary sense, by its union with complacency.* Ordinary wonder is delightful, but is totally destitute of moral excellence. Religious wonder is still more delightful; and may be excellent in any degree.

Secondly. *Dependence* is also an exercise of the same spirit.

That we are all dependent on God is known to every person, possessed of reason; and that we are absolutely dependent on him for every thing which we enjoy, or which we need. *A Willingness to be thus dependent, a complacency in this state of things as appointed by God, accompanied with that humble frame of mind, necessarily attendant upon these affections, constitute what is called Religious Dependence,* a state of mind, exactly suited to our condition, and eminently useful to our whole Christian character and life.

To these may be added *Faith, Hope*, and *Joy*, which have already been subjects of discussion; and to these, *Submission*, which will be made the theme of a future discourse.

The text contains a command, addressed to all those to whom *St. Peter* wrote, requiring that they should be clothed with humility; and enforces the precept by this combined reason, that *God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.* No precept of Revelation has been more disrelished by infidels than this. *Hume* attacks it in form, and considers the disposition enjoined as both vicious and contemptible. Still it is largely insisted on in the Scriptures, and is required of us unconditionally and indispensably. It is declared to precede all real honour, and thus to be necessary even to its existence. It is pronounced to have been an important attribute in the character of Christ himself. *Learn of me*, says the Saviour of mankind, *for I am meek and lowly of heart.* In the text itself it is plainly asserted to be an object of Divine favour in such a sense, that the grace or free love of God is com-

municated to those who are humble, and denied to those who are not. In the Scriptural scheme, therefore, humility is invested with an importance which cannot be measured.

It must indeed be confessed that nothing is more unaccordant with the native disposition of mankind. Pride, the first sin of our common parents, has characterized all their posterity. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that Humility should be disesteemed and calumniated. *If* it *were of the world, the world would* undoubtedly *love his own; but because* it is *not of the world, therefore the world hateth* it.

Of this attribute of the human mind, as it is exhibited in the Scriptures, I observe,

1st. *It involves, in its nature, a just sense of our character and condition.*

We were born yesterday of the dust, and to-morrow return to the dust again. In our origin, and in our end, there is certainly little to awaken our pride. In both, we are closely allied to the beasts that perish; and may with the strictest propriety, *say to corruption, Thou art our father; and to the worm, Thou art our mother and our sister.* How strange is it that a being should be proud, who is going to the grave; who in a few days will lie down in the dust, to become a feast of worms, and to be changed into a mass of earth! Such however will speedily be the lot of the haughtiest monarch, the most renowned hero, and the proudest philosopher who now says in his heart, *I will ascend up to heaven, I will be like the Most High.*

During this little period, we are *dependent* creatures. Nothing is more coveted, nothing more eagerly sought, nothing boasted of with more complacency, by the children of pride, than Independence. But the boast is groundless; and the opinion, which gives birth to it, false. *What hast thou,* says St. Paul, *which thou hast not received?* From God we derive life and breath, and all things. All of them are mere gifts of his bounty; and to the least of them we cannot make a single claim. To his sovereign pleasure, also, are we every moment indebted for their continuance. That which He gives, we gather. He opens his hand, and we are filled with good. He takes away our breath; we die and return to dust.

But we are not dependent on God only. To a vast extent we are necessarily indebted, for a great body of our enjoyments, to our fellow-men. We can have neither food nor raiment: we can neither walk nor ride; we can have neither sleep nor medicine; we can neither enjoy ourselves, nor be useful to others without the aid of multitudes of our fellow-men. Especially is the proud man thus dependent. Life to him is only a scene of suffering, unless he is continually regaled by the real or imagined respect of those around him. Homage is the food on which he lives.

and applause, the atmosphere in which alone he is able to breathe.

Among those on whom we are thus dependent sometimes for life itself, and always for its comforts, are to be regularly numbered the poor, whom we are so prone to despise; nay, the slaves whom we regard as having been created merely as instruments of our pleasure. To what a lowly condition is a haughty man thus reduced, and how different his actual situation from that which his conversation and demeanour would induce us to imagine!

Nor is our situation less *precarious* than it is dependent. The possessions, the comforts, the hopes, which we enjoy to-day, may all to-morrow vanish for ever. Our riches may make to themselves wings as an eagle, and fly away towards heaven. Our health may be wrested from us by disease, and our comfort by pain. We may become decrepit, deaf, or blind. Our friends and families may bid us the last adieu, and retire to the world of spirits. Nay, ourselves and our pride may be buried together in the grave. What foundation does such a state of existence furnish on which to build our pride?

We are also *ignorant*. Much indeed is said of our learning and science. It would be well if more could be said, and said with truth concerning our wisdom. With all our boasts, how little do we know! How many objects are presented to us every day of which we know nothing except their existence! How many questions do even little children ask, which no philosopher is able to answer! How many subjects of investigation say to every inquirer, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further!"

Every thing which we know brings up to our view the many more which we cannot know; and thus daily forces upon us, if we will open our eyes, irresistible conviction of the narrowness of those limits by which our utmost researches are bounded, of the infantile nature of our actual attainments, of the smallness of those which are possible.

Among the subjects which display this ignorance in the strongest degree, those of a moral nature, those which immediately concern our duty and salvation, infinitely more important to us than any others, hold the primary place. What man is able to find out of himself concerning these, we know by what he has actually found out. Cast your eyes over this great globe, and over the past ages of time, and mark the nature of the religious systems invented by man. How childish, how senseless, how self-contradictory, have been the opinions; how infatuated, how sottish, the precepts by which they have professedly regulated the moral conduct of men; how debased, how full of turpitude, how fraught with frenzy, the religious services by which they have laboured to propitiate their Gods, and obtain a future happy existence; nay, what mere creatures of Bedlam were the Gods themselves, and their delirious worshippers!

But for the Scriptures, we should now have the same views, which have been spread over the whole heathen world; and might this day have been prostrating ourselves before stocks and stones, and looking to drunkenness, prostitution, and the butchery of human victims as the means of obtaining a happy immortality. How inexpressibly deplorable is this ignorance! How humble the character of those of whom it can be truly predicated!

For our exemption from all these errors, we are indebted solely to the Bible. But with this invaluable book in our hands we reluctantly admit, in many cases, even its fundamental truths: truths of supreme importance to the establishment of virtue in our minds, and to the acquisition of eternal life beyond the grave: truths which are the glory of the Revealed System, and which have been the means of conducting to heaven a multitude which no man can number. In the place of these, what absurdities have not been imbibed! absurdities immeasurably disgraceful to the understanding, and absolutely ruinous to the soul. How long these absurdities have reigned! How widely they have spread! What innumerable mischiefs they have done! How strongly they discover a violent tendency in our nature to reject truth and welcome error! Who with this picture before him can doubt that on this account we have abundant reason for humility?

In addition to these things, we are *sinful* creatures. *The heart*, says the Prophet Jeremiah, *is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.* He who reads the three first chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, or peruses the history of mankind, or attentively considers the conduct of himself and his fellow-men, will without much hesitation adopt the decision of the Prophet. It is wonderful that sinful beings should be proud of their character; and remarkable that pride is indulged by no other beings. Of what shall we be proud? In our conversation and in our writings we charge each other endlessly with impiety, profaneness, perjury, irreligion, injustice, fraud, falsehood, slander, oppression, cruelty, theft, lewdness, sloth, gluttony, and drunkenness. The charges are either true or false. If they are false, they are in themselves abominable wickedness. If they are true, those on whom they rest are abominably wicked. What an unhappy foundation is here furnished for pride!

If we look into our own hearts, and into our own lives, and perform this duty faithfully, we shall find ample reason for self-condemnation; we shall see that our own hearts, at least, answer to the declaration of Jeremiah: we shall see ourselves alienated from God, revolted from his government, opposed to his law, ungrateful for his blessings, distrustful of his sincerity, and discontented with his administrations. With all these sins before us, we shall find ourselves slow of heart to believe or repent.

God has provided for us, and proffered to us, deliverance from our sins, and from the punishment which they have merited. He

has sent a Saviour into the world to redeem us from under the curse of the law, and that by the effusion of his own blood: but we reject him. He has sent his Spirit to sanctify us, and to make us his children; but we resist his influence. He has offered to be reconciled to us: but we refuse to be reconciled to him. We might be virtuous, we might be happy; but we will not. What causes for humiliation are here presented to our view!

Finally. We are *miserable* creatures. In the present world we are, to a great extent, unhappy. Cold and heat, hunger and thirst, anxiety, disappointment, toil, poverty, loss of friends, disgrace, sorrow, pain, disease, and death, divide among them a great part of our days, and leave us scarcely more than a few transient gleams of ease, comfort and hope. How often are most of these evils doubled and tripled by similar sufferings of such as are dear to us in the bonds of nature and affection! How truly does *Job* declare that *Man, who is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble!*

From these calamities our only way of escape conducts us to the grave. Beyond that dreary mansion stands the last tribunal, at which our eternal doom will be irreversibly fixed. But the only reward of sin is perdition, perdition final and irremediable. This is the deplorable end of the sins and miseries, which so extensively constitute our character and our allotments in the present world.

Look now at the description which has been given, and tell me for which of these things we shall be proud. Is it our origin, our dependence, the precariousness of our life and its enjoyments, our ignorance, our errors, our sins, or our miseries?

In the mean time, let it be remembered, that this very pride is one of our grossest sins; whether it be pride of birth, of wealth, of beauty, of talents, of accomplishments, of exploits, of place, of power, or of moral character. *A proud look*, from whatsoever source derived, *is an abomination to the Lord.* Angels by their pride lost heaven. Our first parents by their pride ruined the world.

That the view which has been here given of the state and character of man is just, will not, because it cannot, be questioned. Conformed to it are all the views entertained of the same subjects by every man possessing the humility of the Gospel. On these very considerations, especially as applied to himself, is his humility founded.

2dly. *Humility involves a train of affections accordant with such a sense of our character and conditions.*

It involves that candour and equity, which dispose us to receive and acknowledge truth, however humbling to our pride, or painful to our fears, in preference to error, however soothing or flattering. The humble man feels assured, also, that it is his true interest to know and feel the worst of his situation; that a just sense of his

condition may be the means of rendering it more hopeful and more desirable; that false conceptions of it, on the contrary, cannot possibly do him any good, and will in all probability do him much harm; that truth is a highway, which may conduct him to heaven; but that error is a labyrinth in which he may be lost for ever.

Equally disposed is he to do justice to the several subjects of his contemplation. Cheerfully is he ready to feel and to acknowledge that he is just such a being as he actually is; that he is no wiser, no better, no more honourable, and no more safe, but just as lowly, as dependent, as ignorant, as guilty, and as much in danger, as truth pronounces him to be. With the humiliation, dependence, and precariousness of his circumstances he is satisfied, because they are ordained by his Maker. His guilt he acknowledges to be real; and, at the sight of it, willingly takes his place in the dust. His sufferings he confesses to be merited, and therefore bows submissively beneath the rod. Claims he makes none, for he feels that there is nothing in himself to warrant them; and, although he wishes ardently to escape from his sin and misery, he never thinks of demanding it as a right; but, so far as he is permitted, humbly hopes it as a gift of free grace, as a mere blessing derived from the overflowing mercy of his Creator.

Among the subjects which his situation forces upon his mind, the means of expiating his guilt become one of primary importance. After surveying it on every side, he pronounces the attempt hopeless; and sees with full conviction, that, if God should mark iniquity, it would be impossible for him to stand. In this melancholy situation he does not, like the man of the world, rise up in haughty rebellion against God; he does not say, *Who is the Almighty, that I should serve him; and what profit shall I have, if I pray unto him?* He does not insolently exclaim, *Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?* On the contrary, in the language of *Job*, he modestly cries out, *Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* With *Daniel* he sets his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fastings, and sackcloth, and ashes; and he prays unto the Lord his God, and makes his confession, and says, *O Lord, the great and dreadful God! keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love thee, I have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments.*

But, although in himself he sees no means of deliverance or escape, he finds in the Scriptures of truth, ample provision made for both. The provision is complete. An expiation is there made for the sins of men; and a deliverance from the miseries, to which they were destined, effectuated; which involve all that the most sanguine mind can wish concerning both. Still, the scheme involves an absolute humiliation of human pride; for it represents

man as totally destitute of any thing in his native character, or in his efforts, which can recommend him to God, or which can be regarded by the final Judge as any ground of his justification. It is a scheme of mere mercy; and every one, who is to receive the blessings of it, must come in the character of a penitent, supplicating for pardon through the righteousness of a Redeemer.

Nothing can be more painful to pride than this scheme of deliverance; but nothing can be more welcome to the heart of genuine humility. God in the great work of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying man, appears to the humble penitential mind, invested with peculiar glory, excellence, and loveliness. *God*, says St. Paul, *who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* In the work of Redemption, accomplished by this Divine person, the character of God is seen by the sanctified mind in a light entirely new, and more honourable to him than that which is presented by any other work either of Creation or Providence. His benevolence shines, here, in the exercise of mercy towards the apostate children of men, in a manner which is new and singular, a manner in which it has been displayed to the inhabitants of no other part of the Universe. Here, especially, it is discerned that God is Love; and the humble penitent is so deeply affected with the kindness manifested in expiating and forgiving sin, and renewing the soul, that he is ready to exclaim with the Psalmist, *Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but to thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.* In the midst of his astonishment that such mercy should be extended to him, a poor, guilty, miserable wretch, unworthy in his own view of the least of all mercies, the pride even of self-righteousness is for a while at least laid asleep; and his thoughts and affections, instead of being turned towards himself, are absorbed in the condescension and goodness of his Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

It is impossible for the man, in whom this attribute is found, not to turn his thoughts from time to time to the perfect purity of God. No subject of contemplation can more strongly impress upon the mind a sense of its own impurity. In his sight the heavens themselves are not clean, and the angels before him are charged with folly. How much more abominable and filthy to the eye of the penitent must man appear, who drinketh iniquity like water! In the sight of this awful and most affecting object, he will almost necessarily exclaim, with *Job, I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee! Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

When such a man contemplates the character of his Christian brethren, emotions of the same general nature will necessarily occupy his mind. St. Paul has directed Christians to *forbear one another in all lowliness and meekness of mind, and to esteem others bet-*

ter than themselves. This precept, which to a man of the world appears absurd and incapable of being obeyed, involves no difficulty in the eye of him who is evangelically humble. The sins of other Christians are of course, imperfectly known to him. Their sins of thought are all hidden from his eyes: their sins of action he rarely witnesses; and of those, which are perpetrated in his presence, he cannot know either the extent, or malignity. His own sins, in the mean time, both of heart and of life, are in a sense always naked before him; and he can hardly fail to discern, in some good degree, their number, their aggravations, and their guilt. Hence other Christians will, in a comparative sense, appear to him to be clean; while himself will seem unsound and polluted, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. In this situation, the difficulty of esteeming others better than himself vanishes. Impossible as it would be for a proud man to think in this manner; the only difficulty to the humble man is to think in any other.

Such at all times, with the exceptions for which the human character always lays the foundation, will be the emotions naturally imbibed and strongly cherished by Christian humility. But there are certain seasons, in which they will be excited in a peculiar degree. Such will be the case in the house of God. Here he is brought immediately into the presence of his Maker; here he appears in the character of a sinner and of a suppliant for mercy; here he draws nigh to his Maker in the solemn ordinances of the Sanctuary; here the character and sufferings of the Redeemer are set before him in the light of heaven; here he witnesses all the wonders of redeeming, forgiving, and sanctifying love. What God is, and what he himself is, what he has done to destroy himself, and what God has done to save him from destruction, are here presented to his eye, and brought home to his heart, in the most affecting manner. In this solemn place, also, he is in the midst of his fellow-Christians, uniting with them in their prayers and praises, and sitting with them at the table of Christ to celebrate his sufferings, and the love wherewith he loved us and gave himself for us. In such a situation, how great and good must his Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier appear! How little, how unworthy, how sinful! How strange must it seem, that he, who is unworthy of the least, should thus be put into the possession of the greatest of all mercies! How naturally, how often, and how anxiously, will he inquire, whether it can be proper, for such a being as himself, to unite with the followers of the Redeemer in their worship, share in their privileges, and participate in their hopes, and in their joys!

Feelings of the same general nature will also be awakened, and often in an equal degree, when he retires to his closet to pray to his Father who is in secret. Here he withdraws entirely from the world, and meets his Maker face to face. The Divine character, and his own, must be brought before his eyes in the strongest light, while he is employed in confessing his sins, and supplicating pardon and

sanctification; gratefully acknowledging the blessings which he has received, and humbly asking for those which he needs. How naturally would he exclaim, *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldest visit him!*

Such, if I mistake not, are the views formed by Christian humility; and such the affections of the mind in which it prevails.

REMARKS.

From these observations it is evident,

1st. *That Evangelical humility is exactly conformed to the real circumstances and character of men.*

The views, which the humble man entertains of himself, and of his condition, are exactly suited to both. He is just such a being as he supposes himself to be, and in just such a condition. His origin is as lowly, his situation as dependent and precarious, his mind as ignorant and erring, his character as guilty, and his destination fraught with as much distress and danger, as he himself realizes. His views therefore, are absolutely true and just. If such views then are honourable to a rational being, if no other thoughts can be honourable to such a being, then the views entertained by humility are honourable to the human character. On the contrary, the views of pride, or as Mr. Hume chooses to style it, *self-valuation*, are absolutely unsuited both to the condition and character of man. They are radically and universally unjust and false, and of course, are only disgraceful and contemptible.

The affections, which have been here considered as involved in humility, are evidently no less just. They spring irresistibly from the views; and no sober mind can entertain the latter without experiencing the former. These affections are all, plainly, the harmony of the heart with the dictates of the understanding: dictates seen and acknowledged to be just and certain, and, where the heart is governed by candour, irresistible. Whenever the mind sees itself to be thus ignorant, erring, and sinful, and its situation thus dependent, precarious, and distressing; it cannot, without violence done to itself, fail of feeling both the character and condition, and of feeling them deeply; for they are objects of immeasurable importance to its whole well-being. Equally just are the affections, which he exercises towards his Maker and his fellow-Christians. The difference between the character of God and his own character being seen to be such; so entire, so vast, particularly as He is infinitely holy and pure, while himself is altogether polluted with guilt; no emotions can be proper towards this great and glorious Being, which do not involve a strong sense of this amazing moral difference between Him and itself. In such a case, where there is no humility, there can be no reverence towards God; and were there is no reverence, it is impossible that there should be any thing acceptable towards Him.

In the same manner, humility enters into every other affection of a sanctified mind towards its Maker. Our views of the mercy of God exercised towards us, and the emotions excited by them, are exactly proportioned to the apprehensions, which we form of our own unworthiness. He, to whom much is forgiven, our Saviour informs us, will love much. Pardon, Mercy, and Grace, are terms which mean little, if they have any meaning that is realized, in the eye of him who is not humbled for his sins, and who does not feel his own absolute need of pardon. The Song of the redeemed is sung only by those, who realize the love of Christ, because he has washed them from their sins in his own blood. The gratitude, therefore, exercised to God for his unspeakable mercy, in forgiving our sins, and redeeming us from under the curse of the Law, will in a great measure be created by our humility.

In the same manner does it enhance our complacency in the Divine character. Of dependence it is the essence; of adoration, and indeed of all our worship, it is the substance and the soul.

2dly. *From these observations it is evident, that no man can hope for acceptance with God without humility.*

God, says the text, *resisteth the proud, but giveth grace* (or favour) *to the humble.* The proud, and the humble, are two great classes including the whole of the human race. Of which class, does it seem probable to the eye of sober reason, that the infinitely perfect Author of all things will select his own family, and the objects of his everlasting love: those who possess the views and the spirit here described; or those who indulge the "self-valuation" so grateful to Mr. Hume: those who boldly come before him, with *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men;* or those who *dare not lift up their eyes to heaven, but, smiting upon their breasts, say, God, be merciful to me a sinner?* How obvious is it to common sense, that, if he accept any of our race, they will be such as have just views of their character and condition, of their own absolute unworthiness, of the greatness of his mercy in forgiving their sins and sanctifying their souls, of the transcendent glory of the Redeemer in becoming their propitiation, and of the infinite benignity of the Divine Spirit in renewing them in the image, and restoring them to the favour, of God. Who else can possess the spirit, who else can unite in the employments, who else can harmonize in the praises, of the first-born?

Let me ask, is it possible that a proud man should be a candidate for immortal life; whether proud of his birth, his wealth, his station, his accomplishments, or his moral character? Suppose him to arrive in the regions of life, in what manner would his pride be employed? Which of these subjects would he make the theme of his conversation with the spirits of just men made perfect? How would he blend his pride with their worship; how would he present it before the throne of God?

3dly. *From these observations also, we learn that humility is a disposition eminently lovely.*

Learn of me, says the Saviour of mankind to proud and perishing sinners, *for I am meek and lowly of heart.* How astonishing a declaration from the mouth of Him who controlled the elements with a word, at whose command the dead were raised to life, and at whose rebuke demons trembled and fled! Draw nigh ye miserable worms of the dust, place yourselves by the side of this glorious person, and recite before him the foundations on which your loftiness rests; your riches, your rank, your talents, and your stations. How will these subjects appear to his eye? How will those appear, who make them the grounds of their *self-valuation?*—Meekness and lowliness of heart adorned him with beauty inexpressible. Can pride be an ornament to you?

Would you be amiable in the sight of God, you must essentially resemble Him who was "altogether lovely." Even you yourselves cannot but discern, that, had He been proud, it would have tarnished his character, and have eclipsed the face of the Sun of Righteousness.

In the mean time let Christians remember, and feel, that they themselves will be lovely, exactly in proportion as they approximate to the character of the Redeemer in their humility. *The same mind*, says St. Paul to the Philippians, *be in you, which was also in Christ; who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* From what a height did he descend! How lowly the visible station which he assumed!

Your humility towards God will make you lovely in his sight; your humility towards your fellow-Christians will make you lovely in theirs. In both cases, it will be a combination of views and affections conformed to truth, exactly suited to your character and circumstances, and equally conformed to the good pleasure of God, and to the perfect example of his beloved Son. It will mingle with all your affections, and make them sweet and delightful. It will operate on all your conduct, and make it amiable in the sight of every beholder. From pride and all its wretched consequences, it will deliver you. Of the grace of God it will assure you. *For to this man will I look*, says *the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, even to him, who is of a humble and contrite spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.* It will accompany you through life, and lessen all the troubles, and increase all the comforts, of your pilgrimage. It will soften your dying bed, and enhance your hope and your confidence before the last tribunal.

SERMON XCV.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.—RESIGNATION.

LUKE xxii. 41, 42.—*And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.*

THE next exercise of love to God in our progress is Resignation.

Of this excellence the text contains the most perfect example, which has been recorded or witnessed in the Universe. Our Saviour while in the Garden of Gethsemane having withdrawn from *his disciples about a stone's cast, kneeled down, and prayed*, under an agonizing sense of the evils, which he was about to suffer. His prayer in the midst of this agony was, *Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done!* The situation of Christ was much more trying than we can conceive. Yet in this situation he bows his will entirely to the will of God; and prays him to remove the cup, only on the condition that he is willing; and that not his own will, but the will of the Father, may be done. The occasion was wonderful: the Resignation was complete. He yielded himself entirely into the hands of his Father; and earnestly desired, that his will, whatever it should cost himself, might be done. Nothing can be more edifying, than this example: nor can any thing be more instructive. By it we are taught,

1st. *That Religious Resignation is a quiet yielding of ourselves to the disposal of God, and not to the mere sufferance of evil.*

CHRIST *prayed* earnestly, and repeatedly, that, if it were possible, the evil, or *the cup, might pass from him.* That this was perfect rectitude on his part will not be questioned. What he, with perfect rectitude, desired to escape, we may, with entire rectitude also, desire to escape. As *he was not willing* to suffer evil; it *was perfectly right, that he should not be willing.* It is entirely right, therefore, that we should be equally unwilling.

But Christ was entirely willing to do, and to suffer, whatever God willed him to do, or to suffer. He was, however, disposed thus to do, and suffer, merely because it was the will of God; and because that will requires nothing, but what is perfectly wise and good, and perfectly desirable. As, therefore, the perfect Resignation of our Saviour was a yielding of himself to the will of God, and not at all to mere suffering; so it is clear, beyond a debate, that Religious Resignation is, in every case, *of this nature only.*

2dly. *That it is our duty to resign ourselves to the will of God entirely; and that, in all situations of life.*

The situation, in which Christ expressed the Resignation in the text, was certainly much more trying, than any which men experience in the present world. At the same time, he had not merited this distress by any fault, or defect, of his own. His pure and perfect mind was free, alike, from error and from sin. Accordingly, in that memorable prayer, contained in the 17th chapter of John, and uttered just before his agony in the garden, he could say with perfect confidence, as well as with exact truth and propriety, *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work, which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father! glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory, which I had with thee before the world was.* Yet in this situation of peculiar distress, he gave up, entirely, every wish of his own: choosing rather to suffer these wonderful afflictions, if it was the will of God that he should suffer them, than to escape them, if it was not. Whatever afflictions befal us, we are ever to remember, that we have deserved them; and that they are always inferior in intenseness to those, which were suffered by Christ. Our reasons for resigning ourselves entirely to the disposal of God, therefore, are, in some respects, greater than his. In all situations, it of course becomes us to *be still, and know, that he who afflicts us is God.*

To render our Resignation entire, it is indispensable, that it should be unmingled with murmuring, impatience, distrust of the goodness of God, or any dissatisfaction with his Providence. We may lawfully wish, not to suffer evil, considered by itself; but we cannot lawfully wish, that the will of God should not be done.—Nor can we lawfully complain, at any time, of that which is done by his will. He, who complains, has not, if he is resigned at all, arrived at the due degree of Resignation. *Jeremiah*, with irresistible force, asks, *Shall a living man complain; a man for the punishment of his sins?*

3dly. *Religious Resignation is perfectly consistent with the clearest, and strongest, sense of the evils, which we suffer; and with the deepest distress, while we suffer.*

Christ, as I have observed, was perfectly resigned. Yet Christ felt, in the deepest manner, the whole extent of the evils which he suffered. This we know, both because he prayed to be delivered from them, if it were possible; and because his agonies forced the sweat to descend upon him *in the form of great drops of blood.* What Christ did, in this respect, it is lawful for us to do. Christ felt these evils to their full extent; and yet was perfectly resigned. We, therefore, may in the same manner feel the evils, which we experience; and yet be the subjects, in this very conduct, of true Evangelical Resignation.

4thly. *Christian Resignation is perfectly consistent with the most fervent supplications to God for deliverance from the evils which we suffer.*

The evidence of this is complete in the example of Christ. Christ thus prayed, while yet he was perfectly resigned: we, of course, may thus pray, without lessening at all the degree, or affecting the genuineness, of our Resignation.

The obligations, which we are under to exercise this spirit, are founded both in the command of God, and the nature of things. The command of God carries with it, in all cases, an authority and obligation, which are without limits. With this authority he requires us to be resigned to his whole will; asserting it, with the most perfect propriety, to be *His prerogative* alone to prescribe, and *our duty* entirely to obey. We are his creatures; and are, therefore, under all possible obligation to do his pleasure. At the same time, his will is perfectly right; and ought exactly to be obeyed, even if there were no authority to bind, and no reward to retribute, our obedience. Our own supreme good is entirely promoted by our obedience only; both as the obedience itself is delightful, and as it is followed by a glorious and divine reward.

Resignation is not merely a single act, but a general course of obedience; a general preparation of the heart to yield itself to God's known will, and his promised dispensations. I here include, and have all along included, what is commonly called *Submission.* Submission differs from Resignation in nothing but this: *Submission is yielding the heart to the divine will, in that which has already taken place, or is now taking place;* and Resignation, yielding the heart to that, which, it is foreseen, may, or will, hereafter take place. The spirit is exactly the same, as to its nature, in all instances; and the difference is found only in regarding the past, present, or future, accomplishment of the divine will. This distinction is so nearly a nominal one only, that both names are used indiscriminately; and of so little importance, as to preclude any necessary regard to it in this discourse.

This disposition is the only becoming temper in suffering creatures, so far as their sufferings are concerned. The sufferings of mankind, in the present world, are all expressions of the will of God. There are but three dispositions, with which they can be regarded; *impatience, indifference,* or *acquiescence.* It cannot be necessary for me to show, that the last of these is the only spirit with which we can receive either profitably, or becomingly, the chastisements, inflicted by the hand of God.

To acquiesce in the divine pleasure under sufferings is a strong, an eminently excellent exercise of Love and Reverence to God. It is not easy to conceive how we can give a higher, or more decisive testimony of our delight in the divine character, or our approbation of the divine government, than by quietly yielding to that government in circumstances of suffering and sorrow; by testifying with the heart, that we have such a sense of the wisdom and goodness of God, as to be satisfied to undergo whatever afflictions he is pleased to send upon us; and to give up our own wishes and com-

forts, that the pleasure of God may be done, and his glory promoted. This is an exercise of love to our Maker, which proves itself to be genuine, and excellent, by the willing self-denial, which it encounters; and by the victory, which it gains over interest and pleasure powerfully present.

It is also to be remembered, that the Christian, notwithstanding he is a Christian, is still a sinful being. Afflictions are punishments of his sins, incomparably less, than he has deserved. Resignation to them is a candid, equitable, dutiful acknowledgment of the justice of God in sending them, and a humble confession of the sins, by which they have been deserved.

By this spirit the general selfishness of the mind is gradually wasted away; the strength of passion and appetite continually weakened; its impiety prevented; its ingratitude destroyed; and its rebellion broken down. The rebel is converted into a child. A serenity and quietness of disposition take possession of the soul; allay the bitterness of its distresses; sooth all its tumults into peace; mingle comfort in the cup of sorrow; and happily blend with all its sufferings the inherent delight of Resignation; a supporting sense of the approbation and favour of God.

REMARKS.

From this passage of Scripture, thus considered, it is evident,

1st. *That willingness to suffer Perdition is no part of Christian Resignation.*

It is well known to my audience, that the contrary doctrine to that which I have here asserted, has been taught by men of distinguished reputation for learning and piety: and it is equally well known, that no human learning and piety will furnish a sufficient security from error. All human opinions, therefore, may be warrantably questioned; and none are to be received without evidence, upon the mere reputation of their authors. While, therefore, I would treat the authors with becoming respect; I shall take the liberty freely to question their opinions.

That Christian Resignation does not at all involve a willingness to suffer perdition is, in my view, unanswerably clear from the text. To the arguments derived from this source, I shall, however, add a few, out of many, suggested by the nature of the subject.

In the first place, *Christian Resignation is Resignation to nothing but the will of God.* This position has, if I mistake not, been proved beyond debate, in the body of the discourse. *The will of God, by which we are to be governed, is plainly that which is, or can be, known to us.* The proof of this, both from reason and Scripture, is complete. Reason teaches us, or rather we know by intuition, that it is impossible for us to be governed by a rule, which we cannot know. Revelation informs us, that *secret things belong to God; and that only the things which are revealed belong to us,*

and to our children for ever; that we may do all the words of his law. That, then, which is not known to us, cannot belong to us, in any sense, as a rule, or part, of our duty.

But it is not known, and without a new and direct revelation it cannot be known, to any man living, to be the will of God, that he should suffer perdition. The Scriptures reveal to us, that the impenitent and unbelieving will indeed suffer this terrible punishment. But they do not reveal to any man, that he himself will be impenitent and unbelieving, when he leaves the world, or that he will finally be condemned. It is impossible, therefore, for any man to know in this world, that the will of God will require him to suffer perdition. If, then, he resigns himself to this dreadful allotment, as being a part of the will of God; he himself presumptuously establishes by his own contrivance, and conjecture, something as the will of God, which God has not declared to be such; which the man himself cannot know to be such, while in the present world; and which he cannot lawfully presume to be such. Instead, therefore, of resigning himself to the divine will, he resigns himself to a will, which his own imagination creates for God; and is guilty of intruding into the province and assuming the prerogatives of his Creator.

2dly. *Every sincere Professor of Religion either knows or believes himself to be a Christian.*

If he *knows* himself to be a Christian, then he *knows* it to be contrary to the will of God, that he should be finally condemned, or that he should suffer the miseries of perdition. To be willing, *in this case*, to suffer these miseries, is to be willing to suffer that which is known by him to be contrary to the will of God. It is a consent to prevent Christ of one trophy of his Cross, one glorious fruit of his sufferings, and to take a gem from his crown of glory.

If the Professor *believes* himself to be a Christian; then, in being willing to suffer perdition, he is willing to suffer, in direct contradiction to what he *believes* to be the will of God. His belief here ought to have exactly the same influence on his disposition and conduct, as his knowledge in the former case. Wherever we have not, and, at the time when we are to act, cannot have, *certainty*, we are under absolute obligation to be governed by *the highest probability*. In this case, therefore, the duty of the Professor is exactly the same as in the former.

When we remember, that the sufferer becomes, of course, the eternal enemy of God and of all good, and that the Professor, in thus consenting to suffer, consents, in the same act, to be the eternal enemy of God and of all good; and when this consent is yielded in direct contradiction to what he either knows, or believes, to be the will of God; it will, I think, be difficult to find a reason which will evince this conduct to be a part of the Christian's duty.

3dly. *There is no precept in the Scriptures enjoining this conduct.*

It certainly must seem strange, that a duty so extraordinary, and so fitted to perplex the minds of mere men, should, if it be really a duty, be no where expressly enjoined. Certainly it is not likely to be easily embraced by any man. It can hardly be supposed, therefore, if it be really a part of the Evangelical system, to be left to inference, philosophy, and supposition. No precept, so far as we are able to judge, needs more to be clear, and express, than that which should require of us this singular mental effort. But such a precept cannot be found.

4thly. *There is no example of such Resignation recorded in the Scriptures.*

There are two examples, which are alleged in support of the Resignation in question. The first is in Ex. xxxii. 31, 32. *And Moses returned unto the Lord; and said, Oh! this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin: and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written.* The part of this text, which is alleged in support of the doctrine here contended against, is contained in these expressions: *Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin: if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book, which thou hast written.* It is supposed, that *Moses* prayed to God to make him miserable, on the condition specified throughout eternity.

Concerning this subject, I observe, first, that the expression *blot me out of thy book which thou has written*, is wholly figurative; and, like most other figurative language, is capable of being understood in various senses. To say the most, then, it is ambiguous and uncertain. I need not say, that such a doctrine as this, ought not to be founded on an ambiguous passage of Scripture, nor on any uncertainty whatever.

Secondly. It will be admitted, that *Moses*, although he prayed in a violent state of emotion, yet spoke in some accordance with common sense. But the interpretation given to his words by those who teach this doctrine, make him speak the most arrant nonsense. His words are, *Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sins: and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.* Here, according to the abbettors of this doctrine, *Moses* prays, that God would forgive their sin, if he was willing; and if he was unwilling, that he would blot him out of the book of life. They say, that the benevolence of *Moses* was so great, that he chose rather to suffer endless misery, in order to obtain the forgiveness of his countrymen, than to be endlessly happy, and see them condemned. But they do not attend to the words of *Moses*. He himself says no such thing. On the contrary, he prays, that God would blot him out of his book, if he will *not* forgive their sin: choosing not to be happy himself, unless they may be happy with him; and choosing to be endlessly miserable, rather than to be endlessly happy, unless they

may be happy also. This, it must be acknowledged, if it be benevolence, is benevolence of a very extraordinary kind. *Moses*, according to this scheme, is desirous, if he cannot obtain all the good which he wishes, to have none; and, if his countrymen cannot be happy, to be miserable himself: to be endlessly miserable, without the least expectation of doing, without a possibility of doing, any good whatever to them: in plain language, to be endlessly miserable for the sake of being endlessly miserable.

It is also Resignation of an extraordinary kind. Instead of being Resignation to the will of God, it is resignation, directly opposed, and perfectly known by *Moses* himself to be directly opposed, to that will. *Moses* certainly knew, that he was destined to endless life; and therefore certainly knew, that this was the will of God. To this will, thus known, his prayer, interpreted according to this scheme, is directly contradictory. I hesitate not to say, that *Moses* never exercised Resignation of this nature.

Thirdly. *The real meaning of this prayer is, that, on the condition specified, God would take away his life.*

After the rebellion of the *Israelites* at the foot of the Mount, in which they made, and worshipped, the golden calf, God directed *Moses* to *let him alone, that he might consume them;* and promised to *make of Moses* himself *a great nation.* Alluring as this promise was, *Moses* loved *Israel* too well, to forsake them on this pressing occasion. He therefore besought God to forgive them, with great earnestness and anxiety; and prayed fervently also, that, if he would not forgive them, he would take away his own life; probably, that he might not witness the melancholy sight of the ruin of a people, for whom he had done, and suffered, so much, and in whose interests his heart was so entirely bound up. The book here called *the book which God had written*, is a figurative allusion to *a register, in which were recorded the names of living persons;* and in the present case, is considered as a register, written by God, in which were enrolled the names of all living men. To blot out the name is equivalent to taking away the life of the person, thus registered. That this was what was intended by *Moses* must, I think, be unanswerably evident from the observations, which have been already made.

A similar prayer of the same illustrious man is recorded in Numb. xi. 14, 15, *I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And, if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.* The only difference between the two cases seems to be, that in the former case, Moses prayed, that he might not live to see the ruin of his people; and in the latter, requested to be released from life, because he was unable to bear the burden of superintending, and providing for them.

The other passage is Rom. ix. 1—3, *I say the truth in Christ; I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost;*

that I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. Here it is supposed, that *St. Paul* declares himself desirous, or at least capable of being desirous, to suffer final perdition for the sake of rescuing his brethren, the *Israelites*, from their ruinous condition. But, I apprehend, the Apostle says no such thing. For,

In the first place, *the declaration in the Greek* is not *I could wish*, but *I wished: not* ηυχομην, *in the optative mode, but* ηυχομην, *in the indicative.* The Apostle, therefore, here declares a fact, which had taken place; not the state of his mind at the time present; nor a fact, which might take place at that, or any future time. I do not deny, that the indicative is sometimes used for the *optative*, or, as it ought to be here understood, in the *potential*, sense; to denote *what could be done*, instead of *what has been done.* But no case of this kind is to be presumed: nor is such a meaning to be admitted, unless the general construction of a passage renders the admission necessary.

Secondly. *The admission of it here ruins the meaning of the passage altogether.* It is introduced in this manner: *I say the truth in Christ; I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.* Now what is the assertion, to gain credit to which, these three declarations, two of them attended with all the solemnity of an oath, were made? It is found in the following verse. *I have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart.* Can it be imagined, that *St. Paul* would think it necessary, or proper, to preface this assertion in so solemn a manner? Was it a matter even of surprise, that a person, afflicted and persecuted as he was, should be the subject of such sorrow? Could the Apostle need the aid of a triple declaration, and a double oath, to make this assertion believed? And, if these were not necessary, can he be supposed to have used them for such a purpose; or for any purpose whatever?

As this cannot have been the Apostle's meaning of this passage; so, happily, that meaning is sufficiently obvious. *St. Paul*, it is well known, was considered by the *Jews* as their bitter enemy; as hating their temple, worship, and nation; and as conspiring with the Gentiles to subvert all those, which they esteemed their best interests. This prejudice of theirs against him was an immense evil: for it not only obstructed powerfully, and often fatally, the success of his evangelical labours among the Gentiles; but, in almost all instances, prevented the Jews from receiving the Gospel. This evil the Apostle felt in its full force; as he teaches us on many occasions, by endeavouring earnestly to clear himself of the imputation. The present is one of those instances: and the meaning of the passage is rendered perfectly clear, and highly important, when it is considered in this manner; and the propriety of the solemn preface, with which it commences, fully evinced. The

words, rendered, *For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ*, ought to be included, as they plainly were intended to be, in a parenthesis. The passage, truly translated in this manner, will run thus: *I say the truth in Christ; I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost; that I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart, (for I also wished myself separated from Christ) for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.* That the Apostle had really this sorrow and heaviness for his nation he knew would be doubted by some, and disbelieved by others. He therefore naturally, and properly, appeals to God for the reality of his love to them, and for the truth of the declaration, in which it is asserted. To show his sympathy with them in their ruined state, he reminds them, that he was once the subject of the same violent unbelief, and alienation from Christ; and that then he earnestly chose to be what he here calls *anathema*, justly rendered in the margin *separated*, from Christ, just as *they* now chose it. A person, once in this condition, would naturally be believed to feel deeply the concerns of such, as were now in the same condition; and would, therefore, allege this consideration with the utmost force and propriety.

It will, I am aware, be here said, that this interpretation derogates exceedingly from the nobleness, and expansiveness, of the Apostle's benevolence, as exhibited in the construction which I am opposing. It seems to me, that *St. Paul's own meaning* is as really valuable, as any, which is devised for him by his commentators. There can be no more dangerous mode of interpreting the Scriptures, than to drop their obvious sense; and to substitute for it one, which happens to be more agreeable to ourselves. Were I to comment in this manner on the passage before us, I should say, that the meaning, to which I object, is absurd and monstrous; and that, which I adopt, becoming the Apostle's character. At the same time, I would lay no stress on this remark. My concern is with the real sense of the words. St. Paul must be allowed to have spoken good sense: and this the obvious and grammatical construction, here given to his language, makes him speak. Whereas, the construction, which I oppose, makes him speak little less than absolute nonsense.

These two passages therefore, although relied on to support the doctrine which I oppose, do not affect the question at all; and the Scriptures are equally destitue of examples, as of precepts, to warrant the doctrine.

5thly. *There is no motive to induce the Mind to this Resignation.*

By this I do not intend, that no motive is alleged, but that there is none, by which the mind of a rational being can be supposed to be influenced. The motives, by which Christians are induced to be unwilling to suffer perdition, are: 1st, the loss of endless and perfect happiness in heaven; 2dly, the loss of endless and perfect virtue, or holiness; 3dly, the suffering of endless and perfect sin;

4thly, the suffering of endless and perfect misery; and 5thly, the glory of God in the salvation of a sinner. The motive, which must produce the willingness, in question, must be of sufficient magnitude to overbalance all these: each of them infinite. Now what is the motive alleged? It is the delight experienced by the Christian in seeing the glory of his Maker promoted by his perdition. Without questioning the possibility of being influenced by this motive, as far as the *nature of the case*, merely, is concerned, I observe, that the willingness to glorify God in this manner, and the pleasure experienced in glorifying him, (which is the same thing) is to endure but for a moment: that is, during this transient life. The pain, through which this momentary pleasure is gained, is, on the contrary, infinite, or endless, in each of the methods, specified above. Will it be believed, that, if *every volition of man is as the greatest apparent good*, there can be in this case a volition, nay, a series of volitions, contrary to the greatest apparent good: a good, infinitely outweighing that, by which these volitions are supposed to be excited? I say this good is momentary, because the subjects of perdition, immediately after entering upon their sufferings, hate, and oppose, the glory of God throughout eternity. Whatever good, therefore, the Christian can enjoy in glorifying his Creator, he can enjoy only during the present life.

It ought to be observed, that the Resignation, here required of the Christian, extends infinitely beyond that, which was required of Christ himself. *He* was required to undergo only finite and temporary sufferings. *The Christian* is here required to be willing to undergo infinite sufferings. The sufferings of Christ were, and he knew they were, to be rewarded with infinite glory and happiness. Those of the Christian are only to terminate, daily, in increasing shame, sin, and wo, for ever. Christ *for the joy set before him, endured the cross and despised the shame.* There is no joy set before the Christian.

As a rule of determining whether we are Christians, or not, it would seem, that hardly any supposable one could be more unhappy. If we should allow the doctrine to be sound, and scriptural; it will not be pretended, that any, unless very eminent, saints arrive at the possession of this spirit in such a degree, as to be satisfied, that they are thus resigned. None but these, therefore, will be able to avail themselves of the evidence derived from this source. To all others, the rule will be not only useless, but in a high degree perplexing, and filled with discouragement. To be thus resigned will, to say the least, demand a vigour and energy of piety, not often found. Rules of self-examination, incomparably plainer, and more easy of application, are given us in the Scriptures, fitted for all persons, and for all cases. Why, with those in our possession, we should resort to this, especially when it is no where found in the Sacred Volume, it would be difficult to

explain. Yet, if this is not the practical use, to be made of this doctrine, it would not be easy to assign to it any use at all.

The Resignation of the Scriptures, as I have before observed, is either a cheerful submission to the evils, which we actually suffer, or a general, undefinable preparation of mind to suffer such others, as God may choose to inflict. In the Bible this spirit is, I believe, never referred to any evils, which exist beyond the grave. If this remark be just, as I think it will be found, there can be no benefit in extending the subject farther than it has been extended by Revelation. If I mistake not, every good consequence, expected from the doctrine, which I have opposed, will be derived from the Resignation here described: while the mind will be disembarrassed of the very numerous, and very serious, difficulties, which are inseparable from the doctrine in question.

2dly. *Resignation, as here described, is an indispensable duty of mankind.*

The Government of God, even in this melancholy world, is the result of his perfect wisdom, power, and goodness. Now nothing is more evident, than that the government, which flows from such a source, must be absolutely right; or in other words, must be what perfect wisdom and virtue, in us, would certainly and entirely approve. To be resigned to such a government, therefore, would be a thing of course, were we perfectly wise and virtuous. But what this character would prompt us to do, it is, now, our indispensable duty to do.

This, however, is not the only, nor the most affecting, view, which we are able to take of the subject. The Government of God in this world is a scheme of Mercy; the most glorious exhibition, which can exist, of Infinite Goodness. Unless our own perverseness prevent, the most untoward, the most afflicting, dispensations, however painful in themselves, are really fitted in the best manner to promote our best interests. *We know*, says *St. Paul*, *that all things do work*, or, as in the Greek, *labour together for good to them that love God.*

"Good," says *Mr. Hervey*,

> "Good, when He gives, supremely good,
> Nor less, when he denies;
> Even crosses from his sov'reign hand
> Are blessings in disguise."

Surely in such a state of things it must be the natural, the instinctive, conduct of Piety to acquiesce in dispensations of this nature. Under the afflictions which it demands, and which of course it cannot but involve, we may, and must, at times smart; as a child under the rod, when administered by the most affectionate Parental hand: but like children, influenced by filial piety, we shall receive the chastening with resignation and love.

3dly. *Resignation is also a most profitable duty.*

The profit of this spirit is the increase, which it always brings, of virtue and happiness. Our pride and passion, by which we are naturally, and of choice, governed, conduct us only to guilt and suffering. So long as their dominion over us continues, we daily become more sinful, and more miserable, as children become during the continuance of their rebellion against their parents. The first step towards peace, comfort, or hope, in this case, is to attain a quiet, submissive spirit. That God will order the things of the world as we wish, ignorant and sinful as we are, cannot be for a moment believed. The only resort, which remains for us, therefore, is to be satisfied with what he actually does; and to believe, that what he does is wise and good, and, if we will permit it, wise and good for *us*. To be able to say, *Thy will be done*, says *Dr. Young*, "will lay the loudest storm;" whether of passion within, or affliction without.

Children, when they have been punished, are often, and, if dutiful children, always more affectionate, and dutiful, and amiable, than before. Just such is the character of the children of God, when they exercise Evangelical Resignation under his chastening hand. Every one of them, like *David*, finds it *good for himself, that he has been afflicted;* an increase of his comfort; an increase of his virtue and loveliness.

As this disposition regards events not yet come to pass, its effects are of the same desirable nature. For the wisdom and goodness, the fitness and beneficial tendency, of all that is future, the pious mind will rely with a steady confidence on the perfect character of God. With this reliance it will regularly believe, that there is good interwoven with all the real, as well as apparent, evil, which from time to time may take place. With this habitual disposition in exercise, the resigned man will be quiet and satisfied, or at least supported, when others are borne down; and filled with hope and comfort, when worldly men sink in despair. All that dreadful train of fears, distresses, and hostilities, which, like a host of besiegers, assault the unresigned, and sack their peace, he will have finally put to flight. Safety and serenity have entered the soul: and the Spirit of truth has there found a permanent mansion. Whatever evils still remain in it, his delightful influence gradually removes, as cold, and frost, and snow, vanish before the beams of the vernal sun. He will yield God his own place and province, and rejoice that *his throne is prepared in the heavens*, and that *his kingdom is over all*. His own station he will at the same time cheerfully take with the spirit of a dutiful and faithful subject, or an obedient child; and confide in the divine Wisdom for such allotments as are best suited to make him virtuous, useful, and happy. In this manner he will disarm afflictions of their sting, and deprive temptations of their danger, and his spiritual enemies of their success, by quietly committing himself and his interests to the disposal of his

Maker. In this manner he will become effectually prepared for that glorious and happy world, in which all these evils will have *passed away;* and be succeeded by a new, divine, and eternal, train of enjoyments. In this manner *the work of Righteousness* in his mind *will be peace, and the effect of Righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever.*

SERMON XCVI.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE SECOND GREAT COMMANDMENT.—LOVE TO OUR NEIGHBOUR.

MARK xii. 31.—*And the second is like; namely this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

IN several preceding discourses, I have considered the great duties of *Love*, *Reverence*, and *Humility*, *towards God*, and *Resignation to his will;* and given a summary account of *the other duties of Piety.* I shall now proceed to an examination of *the Second Command.*

In this precept, we are required *to love our Neighbour as ourselves.* In canvassing the duty, here enjoined, I shall consider,

I. *Its Nature;* and,

II. *Its Extent.*

I. *I shall make a few observations concerning the Nature of this duty.*

Before I proceed directly to this subject, it will be proper to remind my audience, that, in the discourse concerning *Love*, considered as *an Attendant of Regeneration*, I exhibited it at length as *a disinterested disposition;* and, *in this particular view*, exhibited *its Nature*, so far as is necessary to this system. Nothing further will be needed under this head, except *an explanation of the degree*, in which we are required to love our neighbour, expressed in the words *as thyself.*

This phraseology has been very differently understood by different persons. Some have supposed it to contain a direction, *that we should love our neighbour with the same kind of Love, which is exercised towards ourselves.* This plainly cannot be its meaning. The love, which we usually and naturally exercise towards ourselves, is selfish and sinful. Such a love, as this, may be, and often is, exercised towards our children, and other darling connexions; and wherever it exists, is, of course, sinful; and cannot, therefore, have been commanded by God. At the same time, it is physically impossible, that we should exercise it towards our fellow-creatures at large; the real objects of the affection required in the text; as I shall have occasion to show under the second head. Others have insisted, *that we are required to love them in the same manner, as ourselves.* This cannot be the meaning. For we love ourselves inordinately; unreasonably; without candour, or equity; even when the kind of Love is really Evangelical.

Others, still, have supposed, that the command obliges us *to love our neighbour in exactly the same degree in which we ought to love ourselves.* This interpretation, though nearer the truth than the others, is not, I apprehend, altogether agreeable to the genuine meaning of the text. It has, if I mistake not, been heretofore shown satisfactorily, that we are, in our very nature, capable of understanding, realizing, and feeling, whatever pertains to ourselves more entirely, than the same things, when pertaining to others; that our own concerns are committed to us by God in a peculiar manner; that God has made it in a peculiar manner our duty to *provide for our own; especially for those of our own households;* and that, thus, a regard to ourselves, and those who are ours, is our duty in a peculiar degree. To these things it may be justly added, that we are not bound to love all those, included under the word neighbour, in the same degree. Some of these persons are plainly of much greater importance to mankind, than others; are possessed of greater talents, of higher excellence, and of more usefulness. Whether we make their happiness, or their excellence, the object of our love; in other words, whether we regard them with Benevolence, or Complacency; we ought plainly to make a difference, and often a wide one, between them; because they obviously, and exceedingly, differ in their characters and circumstances. A great, excellent, and useful man, such as St. Paul was, certainly claims a higher degree of love from us, than a person totally inferior to him in these characteristics.

Besides, if this rule of entire equality had been intended in the command, we ought certainly to have been enabled, *in the natural sense*, to perform this duty. But it is perfectly evident, that no man, however well disposed, can exactly measure, on all occasions, the degree of love, exercised by him towards his neighbour, or towards himself; or determine, in many cases, whether he has, or has not, loved himself and his neighbour in the same degree. It is plain therefore, that, according to this scheme, we cannot, however well inclined, determine whether we do, or do not, perform our duty. But it is incredible, that God should make this conduct our duty; and yet leave us, *in the natural sense*, wholly unable to perform it.

For these and various other reasons I am of opinion, that the precept in the text requires us *to love our neighbour, generally, and indefinitely, as ourselves.* The love, which we exercise towards him, is ever to be the same in kind, which we ought to exercise towards ourselves; regarding both ourselves and him as members of the intelligent kingdom; as interested, substantially, in the same manner, in the divine favour; as in the same manner capable of happiness, moral excellence, and usefulness; of being instruments of glory to God, and of good to our fellow-creatures; as being originally interested alike in the death of Christ, and, with the same general probability, heirs of eternal life. This explanation

seems to be exactly accordant with the language of the text. *As* does not always denote exact equality. Frequently it indicates equality in a general, indefinite sense; and, not unfrequently, a strong resemblance, approximating towards an equality. There is no proof, that it intends an exact equality in the text.

In many cases; for example in most cases of commutative justice, and in many of distributive justice; it is in our power to render to others, exactly, that which we render to ourselves. Here, I apprehend, exactness becomes the measure of our duty. The love, which I have here described, is evidently disinterested; and would, in our own case, supply motives to our conduct so numerous, and so powerful, as to render selfish affections useless to us. Selfishness, therefore, is a principle of action totally unnecessary to intelligent beings, as such; even for their own benefit.

II. *The Love, here required, extends to the whole Intelligent Creation.*

This position I shall illustrate by the following observations:

1st. *That it extends to our Families, Friends, and Countrymen, will not be questioned.*

2dly. *That it extends to our Enemies, and by consequence to all Mankind, is decisively taught by our Saviour in a variety of Scriptural passages. Ye have heard, that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father, who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust.* Matt. v. 43, &c. And again; *For if ye love them who love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. But I say unto you, love ye your enemies; and do good, and lend; hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great: and ye shall be called the children of the Highest.* Luke vi. 32, 35. The term, *neighbour*, in this precept, is explained by Christ, at the request of a Scribe, in the parable of the good *Samaritan:* Luke x. 25: and, with unrivalled force, and irresistible conviction, is shown to include the worst and bitterest enemies. Concerning this subject the Scriptures have left no room for debate.

At the same time, it cannot but be satisfactory, and useful, to examine this subject, as it appears in its nature, and is connected with other kindred moral subjects.

It is well known, that the *Pharisees* held the doctrine, that, while we were bound to love our neighbour, that is, our friends, it was lawful to hate our enemies. It is equally well known, that multitudes in every succeeding age have imbibed the same doctrine; and that in our own age, and land, enlightened as we are by the sunshine of the Gospel, there are not wanting multitudes, who adopt the same doctrine; and insist, not only that they may law-

fully hate their enemies, but, also, revenge themselves on such, as have injured them, with violent and extreme retribution.

On this subject I observe,

1st. *That the command, to love our enemies, is enforced by the Example of God.*

This is the very argument, used to enforce this precept by our Saviour. *Love ye your enemies; and do good to them that hate you: and ye shall be called the children of the Highest: for he is kind to the evil and unthankful. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father, who is in heaven, is merciful.* The example of God is possessed of infinite authority. We see in it the conduct, which infinite perfection dictates, and in which it delights; and learn the rules of action, by which it is pleased to govern itself. All that is thus dictated, and done, is supremely right and good. If we wish our own conduct to be right and good; we shall become *followers of God, as dear children*, in all his imitable conduct, and particularly in that, which is so strongly commended to our imitation. Christ also, who has presented to our view in his own life the conduct of God, in such a manner, as to be more thoroughly understood, and more easily copied by us, has in his prayer for his murderers, while suspended on the cross, enforced the precept in the text with unrivalled energy. Nothing could with greater power, or more commanding loveliness, require us to *go and do likewise.*

To hate our enemies is directly opposed to the authority, and the glory, of these examples. The examples are divinely excellent and lovely: the conduct opposed to them is, of course, altogether vile and hateful. Accordingly, this conduct is exhibited to us for the purpose of commending the same precept, also, to our obedience, as the conduct of the worst of men. These love their friends, and hate their enemies; even publicans and sinners do this; and all who do this, and nothing more, bear a moral resemblance to Publicans and sinners.

2dly. *If we are bound to love those only, who are friends to us, we are under no obligation to love God, any longer than while he is our friend.*

If we are not bound to love our enemies; whenever God becomes an enemy to us, we are not bound to love Him. Of course, those who are finally condemned, are freed from all obligation to love God, because he is their enemy. In refusing to love him, therefore, they are guilty of no sin; but are thus far perfectly innocent, and perfectly excellent; because they do that, which is perfectly right. Neither the happiness, nor the excellence, of God furnishes any reason, according to this scheme, why we should regard him either with benevolence or complacency. In the same manner, every person, in the present world, can, by committing the unpardonable sin, release himself from all obligation to love his Maker; because in this manner he renders God his enemy.

In the same manner, every person, under a sentence of reprobation, is released from his obligation to love God; and persons of both these characters are thenceforth entirely innocent and unblameable. According to this doctrine also, sinners can, and do, continually lessen their obligation to love God, in proportion as they make him more and more angry with them day by day. By advancing, therefore, in a course of opposition and disobedience to God, they advance nearer and nearer to an unblameable life and character.

3dly. *According to this doctrine, good men are not bound, in ordinary cases, to love sinners.*

That sinners are, ordinarily, enemies to good men, will not be questioned: that they, often, are very bitter enemies, cannot be denied. If, then, this doctrine be true; good men are, plainly, not bound to love them, nor, of course, to befriend them; to relieve their distresses; to promote their happiness; nor to seek their salvation.

4thly. *According to this doctrine, sinners are not, ordinarily, bound to love each other.*

Sinners are not only enemies to good men, but to each other. In every such case, they are relieved from all obligations to love each other; and so long as they continue to be enemies, are justified not only in the sight of man, but in the sight of God also, in withholding their love, and the expression of it, from each other.

Let us now, for a moment, attend to the necessary, and practical, consequences of this doctrine. A moral being, whose moral conduct is such, as to justify us in withholding our love from him, cannot be regarded with indifference; but must of course be hated; and, so far as I can see, may justifiably be hated, because his character is really hateful. But if it be right to hate our enemies, it is undoubtedly right to exhibit our hatred of them in its proper expressions; such as censure, punishment, and hostilities. On this principle, mankind would contend with each other, in their public and private controversies, on the ground, that it was right; because it was dictated by conscience, and not merely by passion. He, who beheld an enemy, would be justified in hating him; and he, who was thus hated, would, on the same ground, be justified in reciprocating the hatred. To express this justifiable hatred in quarrels would be equally accordant with rectitude; and men would fight each other, on a new basis of principle. Revenge would be accounted *doing God service.* The persecutor, burning with rage against the miserable victims of his cruelty, exulting in his successful ravages of human happiness, and smiling over the tortures of the rack, and the agonies of the flame, would with new confidence say, "Let the Lord be glorified." War, instead of being the conflict of pride, avarice, ambition, and wrath, would be changed into an universal crusade of piety: and new Mohammeds would stalk through the world, to execute righteousness by

butchery, and plant truth with the sword. Every national contest would become a war of extermination. Every land would be changed, by a professed spirit of righteousness, into a mere field of slaughter; and every age, by the mere dictates of conscience, converted into a period of unmingled and immeasurable woe.

The contrary principle, in good men, wherever they are found, is an extensive source of the peace and comfort, actually enjoyed in this unhappy world: and its influence on the consciences even of wicked men is such, as to effectuate no small quiet and comfort for themselves and others; and to prevent much of the evil, naturally flowing from this pernicious doctrine.

But the one half of the story is not yet told. Had God adopted this doctrine as the rule of his own conduct, what would, long since, have become of mankind? Sinners never love God; but always hate him; and of consequence rebel against his government, violate his law, and oppose his designs. In other words, they are uniformly, and unceasingly, his enemies. Had God, then, been governed by this principle; had he hated his enemies, nay, had he exercised no love, tenderness, or compassion, for them; he must immediately have exerted his infinite power, to render them only, and eternally, miserable. In this case, no scheme of Redemption would ever have been formed for our miserable race by the Infinite Mind. The compassionate and glorious Redeemer, instead of becoming incarnate, instead of living and dying for sinners, would have *clad himself* only *with vengeance as a cloak;* and arrayed himself with anger as a robe and a diadem. Instead of ascending the cross, and entering the tomb, he would merely *have trodden the wine-press alone, and trampled the people in his fury. Their blood would have been sprinkled on his garments, and stained all his raiment. The day of vengeance*, only, would have been *in his heart; and the year of his redeemed* would have never *come.*

No *sun* would now *rise upon the unjust:* no *rain descend upon the evil and unthankful.* The Word of life would never have been revealed to mankind. The Sabbath, with its serene, peaceful, and cheering beams, would never have dawned upon this melancholy world; nor the Sanctuary unfolded its doors, that sinners might enter in, and be saved. The voice of Mercy would never have been heard within its hallowed walls. God would never, with infinite tenderness, have called rebels and apostates to faith, repentance, and holiness, in the Lord Jesus Christ; nor proffered pardon, and peace, to the returning penitent.

Heaven would never have opened the gates of life and glory to this ruined world. The *general assembly of the first-born* would never have been gathered; nor would that divine kingdom, which shall for ever increase in its peace and prosperity, its virtue and glory, ever have begun.

The fairest attribute, the peculiar excellence, of the Godhead, the divine Mercy, would neither have been unfolded, nor existed. Angels would never have sung, *Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth; and good-will towards men.* On the contrary, sin without bounds, and misery without end, would have reigned with an uninterrupted and eternal dominion over all the millions of the race of *Adam.*

From these considerations it is unanswerably evident, that all Mankind are included under the word *neighbour.*

3dly. *This term, of course, extends to all other Intelligent beings, so far as they are capable of being objects of love;* or, in other words, *so far as they are capable of being happy.*

To desire the happiness of beings who cannot be happy, is to exercise our affections in vain. To desire the happiness of those, whom God has doomed for their sins to everlasting suffering, is to oppose his known, declared will. But even in these extreme cases, it is, I apprehend, our duty to feel a general spirit of benevolence towards the miserable sufferers. God has informed us, that *he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.* It is undoubtedly right, and proper, for us to experience the same disposition. This doctrine may be illustrated in the following manner. Were we to receive tidings from God, that these unhappy beings would, at some future period, be restored to holiness and happiness; every being, under the influence of this love, would rejoice with inexpressible joy; and would find, that, instead of indulging enmity towards them, he had ever been ready to exercise a benevolent concern for their welfare.

That virtuous beings, throughout the universe, are proper objects of this love, will hardly be disputed. Of these beings, angels only are known to us; and their character, as unfolded in the Scriptures, is a complete proof of this position. To mankind they are related, merely, as intelligent creatures of the same God. Yet they cheerfully become ministering spirits for the benefit of men; inhabitants of a distant world; of the humblest intelligent character; enemies to their Creator; and enemies to themselves. Such an example decides this point without a comment.

4thly. *The Love, required in this precept, extends, in its Operations, to all the good offices, which we are capable of rendering to others.*

The benevolence, enjoined by God, is, as was formerly observed, an active principle, prompting those, whom it controls, to exert themselves in all the modes of beneficence which are in their power, and are required by the circumstances of their fellow-men. Infinitely different from the cold philanthropy of modern philosophers, which spends itself in thoughts and words, in sighs and tears, its whole tendency is to employ itself in the solid and useful acts of kindness, by which the real good of others is efficaciously promoted. This philanthropy overlooks the objects which are around it,

and within its reach; and exhausts itself in pitying sufferers in foreign lands, and distant ages: sufferers, so distant, as to be incapable of receiving relief from any supposable beneficence, which it might exercise. These are, indeed, most convenient objects of such a philanthropy. For, as it is impossible to do them good by any acts of kindness, which are in our power, we naturally feel ourselves released from the obligation to attempt any such acts; and thus enjoy, with no small self-complacency, the satisfaction of believing, that, although we do no good, we are still very benevolent; and are contented with thinking over the good, which we would do, were the objects of our benevolent wishes within our reach. It is remarkable, that all kindness of this nature is ardent and vivid upon paper, and flourishes thriftly in conversation; but, whenever it is summoned to action by the sight of those, whom it ought to befriend, it languishes, sickens, and dies. Its seat is only in the imagination; and unfortunately it has no connexion either with the purse, the hand, or the heart. In the same manner, professed hospitality is often struck dumb by the arrival of a guest; and boasted patriotism, at the appearance of a proposed subscription for some beneficial public purpose.

Such is not the love of the Gospel. The happiness of others is its original, commanding object; and the promotion of that happiness its employment, and delight. The objects for whom, and the manner in which, it is to be employed, are felt to be of no consequence, if good can really be done. The kind of good is also a matter of indifference; provided it be real, and as extensive, as the nature of the case will admit.

It will be useful to illustrate this subject in a number of particulars, sufficient to exhibit its tendency and extent, in the variety of its operations.

First. *The Love, required in this precept, will prevent us from voluntarily injuring others.*

Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. The stress, here laid upon this characteristic of love, is remarkable. For *St. Paul* declares, that for this reason it is the fulfilling of the Law. We are not, indeed, to understand, that this is the *only* reason; but that it is one very important reason. At the same time we are to remember, that voluntary beings who do no ill, always, and of course, do good.

From this characteristic of Evangelical love we learn, that those who are controlled by it, cannot be the authors of falsehood, fraud, slander, sophistry, seduction, pollution, quarrels, oppression, plunder, or war. All these, in whatever degree they exist, are real, and usually are great injuries to others. These, therefore, are in no sense fruits of love. They may, and do indeed, exist in greater or less degrees, in the minds, and lives, of those, who are the subjects of it; but it is because their love is partial and imperfect. Were this spirit to become the universal, and the only, character

of mankind; what a mighty mass of human calamities would vanish from the world!

Secondly. Among the positive acts of beneficence, dictated by the love of the Gospel, *the contribution of our property* forms an interesting part. To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to perform other acts, generally of the same nature, have by mankind at large been esteemed such eminent and important specimens of this spirit, as to have appropriated to themselves the very name of *Charity;* that is, of *Love;* to the exclusion of other efforts, not less truly benevolent. They are, at the same time, accompanied, more obviously than most other communications of beneficence, by the appearance of self-denial, and of doing good without reference to a reward.

But although acts of this kind are peculiarly amiable, and peculiarly respected, they are, still, no more really dictated by Evangelical love, than the contribution of our property to the purposes of hospitality, to the support of schools and colleges, the erection of churches, the maintenance of ministers, and the support of government. All these are important means of human happiness; and he, who does not cheerfully contribute to them, is either ignorant of their nature, and his own duty, or is destitute of Evangelical benevolence.

Thirdly. *Love to our neighbour dictates, also, every other office of kindness which may promote his present welfare.*

Under this extensive head are comprehended our Instruction of others; our Advice; our Countenance; our reproof; our Sympathy with them in their joys and sorrows; those which are called our Civilities; our obligingness of deportment; our Defence of their good name; our Professional assistance; our peculiar efforts for their relief and comfort, on occasions which peculiarly demand them; and, especially, those kind offices, which are always needed by the sick and the afflicted. The tendency of love, like that of the needle to the pole, is steadily directed to the promotion of happiness, and of course to the relief of distress. The cases in which this object can be obtained, and the modes in which it can be accomplished, are of no consequence in the eye of Love. It only asks the questions, how, when, and where good can be done? When these are satisfactorily answered, it is ever ready to act with vigour and efficacy, to the production of any good; except that it is regularly disposed to devote its labours, especially, to that which is especially necessary. As its sole tendency is to promote happiness; it is evident, that it cannot but be ready to act for this end, in whatever manner may be in its power. He, therefore, who is willing to do good in some cases, and not in others, will find little reason to believe, that he possesses the benevolence of the Gospel.

Fourthly. *Love to our neighbour is especially directed to the good of his soul.*

As the soul is of more worth than the body; as the interests of eternity are more important than those of time; so the immortal concerns of man demand, proportionally, the good-will, and the kind offices, of his fellow-men. In discharging the duties, created by this great object of benevolence, we are required to instruct, counsel, reprove, rebuke, restrain, encourage, comfort, support, and invigorate them, so far as it shall be in our power. We are also bound to forgive cheerfully their unkindness to us; to bear with their frowardness; to endure patiently their slowness of apprehension, or reformation; and to repeat our efforts for their good; as we have opportunity, unto the end. For this purpose we are bound *to hope concerning them, so long as hope can be exercised;* that neither we, nor they, may be discouraged; and *to pray for them without ceasing.* All these offices of kindness are the immediate dictates of Evangelical Love. He, therefore, who does not perform them in some good measure at least, can lay no claim to the benevolence of the Gospel.

REMARKS.

1st. *From these observations it is evident, that the Second great Command of the Moral Law is, as it is expressed in the text, like the First.*

It is not only prescribed by the same authority, and possessed of the same obligation, unalterable and eternal; but it enjoins exactly the exercise of the same disposition. The Love, required in this command, is exactly the same which is required in the first: a single character, operating now towards God, and now towards our fellow-creatures. Equally does it resemble the first in its importance. *That* regulates all our conduct towards God; this towards other Intelligent beings. Each is of infinite importance; each is absolutely indispensable. If either did not exist, or were not obeyed; a total and dreadful chasm would be found in the virtue and happiness of the universe. United, they perfectly provide for both. The duty, prescribed in the first, is undoubtedly first in order: but that, prescribed by the last, is no less indispensable to the glory of God, and the good of the Intelligent creation.

2dly. *Piety and Morality are here shown to be inseparable.*

It has, I trust, been satisfactorily evinced, that the love, required in the divine law, is a single disposition; indivisible in its nature; diversified, and distinguishable, only as exercised toward different objects. When exercised towards God, it is called *Piety;* when exercised towards mankind, it is customarily styled Morality. Wherever both objects are known, both are loved of course by every one, in whom this disposition exists. He, therefore, who loves not God, loves not man; and he who does not love man, does not love God.

3dly. *We here see, that the Religion of the Scriptures is the true, and only, source of all the duties of life.*

On the obedience of the first and great commandment is founded the obedience of the second: and *on these two hang all the Law and the Prophets:* the precepts of Christ, and the instructions of the Apostles. Religion commences with Love to God; and terminates in love to man. Thus begun, and thus ended, it involves every duty; and produces every action, which is rewardable, praiseworthy, or useful. There is nothing, which ought to be done, which it does not effectuate: there is nothing which ought not to be done, which it does not prevent. It makes Intelligent creatures virtuous and excellent. It makes mankind good parents and children, good husbands and wives, good brothers and sisters, good neighbours and friends, good rulers and subjects; and renders families, neighbourhoods, and States, orderly, peaceful, harmonious, and happy. As it produces the punctual performance of all the duties, so it effectually secures all the rights, of mankind. For *rights, in us, are nothing, but just claims to the performance of duties by others.* Thus the Religion of the Scriptures is the true and only source of safety, peace, and prosperity, to the world.

SERMON XCVII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE SECOND GREAT COMMANDMENT.—THE EFFECTS OF BENEVOLENCE ON PERSONAL HAPPINESS.

ACTS xx. 35.—*I have shewed you all things, how that, so labouring, ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said; It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

IN the preceding discourse, I considered, at some length, that Love to our Neighbour, which is required in the Second Command of the *moral law*. I shall now attempt to show, *that this disposition is more productive of happiness, than any other.*

The speech of St. Paul, recorded in this chapter, I have long considered as the most perfect example of pathetic eloquence, ever uttered by man. The occasion, the theme, the sentiments, the doctrines, the style, are all of the most exquisite kind, wholly suited to each other, and calculated to make the deepest impression on those who heard him. *The elders of the Church of Ephesus*, to whom it was addressed, were ministers of the Gospel; converts to Christianity made by himself; his own spiritual children, who owed to him, under God, their deliverance from endless sin and misery, and their attainment of endless holiness and happiness. They were endeared to him, as he was to them, by the tenderest of all possible ties; presiding over a Church, formed in the capital of one of the principal countries in the world; at a period when heresy, contention, and dissoluteness, were prophetically seen by him to be advancing with hasty strides, to ruin Christianity in that region. This address was, therefore, delivered at a time when all that was dear *to him*, or *them*, was placed in the most imminent hazard of speedy destruction. *They* were the persons, from whom almost all the exertions were to be expected which might avert this immense evil, and secure the contrary inestimable good; the Shepherds, in whose warm affection, care, and faithfulness, lay the whole future safety of the flock. *He* was the Apostle, by whom the flock had been gathered into the fold of Christ, and by whom the shepherds were formed, qualified, and appointed. He had now come, for the great purpose of admonishing them of their own duty, and of the danger of the flock, committed to their charge. He met them with the tenderness of a parent, visiting his children after a long absence. He met them for the last time. He assembled them to hear his last farewell on this side the grave.

To enforce their duty in the strongest manner, he begins his address with reminding them of his manner of life, his piety, faithfulness, zeal, tenderness for them, disinterestedness of conduct, fortitude under the severest sufferings, diligence in preaching the Gospel, steady dependence on God, and entire devotion to the great business of the salvation of men. To them, as eye witnesses, he appeals for the truth of his declarations. *Them* he charges solemnly, before God, to follow his example: warning them of approaching and accumulating evil; and commending them to the protection, and grace, and truth, of God, for their present safety, and future reward.

With this extensive, most solemn, and most impressive preparation, he closes his discourse, in a word, *with the great truth which he wished to enforce, and the great duty which he wished to enjoin*, as the sum, and substance, of all his instructions, precepts, and example; exhorting them to *remember the words of the Lord Jesus, which he said, It is more blessed to give, than to receive.*

In no remains of *Demosthenes*, or *Cicero*, can be found the same simplicity, address, solemnity, tenderness, and sublimity, united. *Paul* was a man immensely superior to either of these celebrated Orators in excellence of character; and with the aid of Christianity to influence, and Inspiration to direct, rose to a height, and enlarged his views to an extent, of which no other man was ever capable. His eloquence, like the poetry of Isaiah, rises beyond every parallel; and the excellence of his disposition, seconded in a glorious manner the greatness of his views, the tenderness of his sentiments, and the sublimity of his conceptions. He speaks as if he indeed possessed the tongue of Angels; and the things which he utters are such, as Angels, without superior aid, would never have been able to conceive.

The Words, which he declares to have been spoken by the *Saviour*, are no where recorded in the Gospels, as having been uttered in the manner here specified. They were, however, unquestionably the words of Christ; and not improbably addressed to *Paul* himself. Be this as it may, they are words of the highest possible import; and may be justly considered as the language of all our Saviour's preaching, and of all his conduct. The Spirit by which he was governed, they perfectly describe; the actions which he performed, and the sufferings which he underwent, they perfectly explain. Of all his precepts they are a complete summary; and of his whole character, as a moral being, they are a succinct, but full and glorious exhibition.

The import of them cannot be easily mistaken, unless from choice. *To give*, is an universal description of *communicating good; to receive*, an equally extended description of *gaining it from others.* The former of these two kinds of conduct is pronounced here to be happier or *more blessed* than the latter. *To be blessed*, is to receive happiness from God, from our fellow-crea-

tures, or from ourselves; and denotes, therefore, *all the good, which we do now*, or *shall hereafter, enjoy*. The doctrine of the text is, therefore, that,

It is more desirable to communicate happiness, than to receive it from others.

I am aware that the selfishness, which dwells in every human mind, and clouds every human intellect, as well as biasses every human decision concerning moral subjects, revolts at this doctrine. To admit it, is a plain condemnation of our ruling character, and a judicial sentence of reprobation on all our conduct. *In a world of selfish beings*, where one universal disposition reigns, and ravages; it cannot but be expected by a man, even moderately versed in human nature, that the general suffrage will be given, in favour of the general character. Every man knows, that his own cause is in question; and that his vote is an acquittal, or condemnation of himself. From this interested tribunal an impartial issue cannot be hoped. *In a virtuous world*, instead of that proverbial, and disgraceful aphorism, that, *where you find a man's interest, you find the man*, the nobler and more vindicable sentiment, *that, we should find the man, where we find his duty*, would unquestionably prevail. If the united voice of our race, therefore, should decide against this great evangelical doctrine, *the innumerable company of Angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect*, may be easily expected to give their unqualified decision in its favour. In their happy residence, a selfish being would be a prodigy, as well as a monster.

Even in our own world, we may, however, lay hold on facts, which fully evince the doctrine to be possible. *Parents* are often found preferring the happiness of their children to their own personal and private good, and enjoying more satisfaction in communicating good to *them*, than in gaining it from the hands of *others*. Friends have frequently found their chief happiness in promoting the well-being of the objects of their friendship. *Patriots* have, sometimes at least, cheerfully forgotten all private concerns, and neglected the whole business of gaining personal gratification, for the sake of rendering important services to their beloved country. The Apostles also, with a spirit eminently disinterested and heavenly, cheerfully sacrificed every private consideration for the divine purpose of accomplishing the salvation of their fellow-men. Nothing of this nature *moved them; neither counted they their lives dear unto themselves; so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.*

Now, what forbids; what I mean, in the nature of things; that, with an affection as tender and vigorous, as parents feel for their children, and friends for their friends; which patriots have at times felt for their country, and which the Apostles of Christ felt for the souls of their fellow-men; we should, in a nobler state of exist-

ence, escape from the bonds of selfishness, and send forth our good-will to every intelligent being whom we know, in such a manner, as to take delight in the happiness of all around us, and to experience our first enjoyment in communicating good, wherever we could find a recipient. That such a disposition would be a desirable one, will not be disputed. Why may it not exist? What is there, which will, of necessity, forbid such enlargement, excellency, and dignity, of moral character? Why may not a world be filled with Intelligent beings, devoted to this great and God-like end, and gloriously exhibiting the image and beauty of their Creator? The only answer to these questions, which an opponent can bring, is, that in this guilty, wretched world, the contrary spirit universally prevails. On the same ground, the tenants of a gaol may rationally determine, that the mass of fraud, theft, rape, and murder, for which they are consigned to chains and gibbets, is the true and only character, which exists in the palace of sovereignty, the hall of legislation, the household of piety, and the Church of God.

Admitting, then, that such a disposition is possible; admitting, that it has, at least in superior worlds, a real existence; admitting, still farther, as all who really believe the dictates of the Gospel must admit, that it exists in every sincere Christian, even in *this* world: I proceed to establish the doctrine by observing,

I. *That all the happiness, which is enjoyed in the Universe, flows originally from the voluntary activity of Intelligent beings.*

All happiness is *contrived;* and is brought into existence by carrying that contrivance into execution. Intelligent beings alone can contrive, or execute. From them, from their voluntary agency, therefore, all happiness springs. God, the GREAT INTELLIGENT, began this wonderful and immense work. Intelligent creatures, endued with the faculties necessary for this purpose, coincide with him, as instruments, in carrying on the vast design. On the part of Him, or them, or both, it is the result of design. If happiness, then, is to exist at all, it must flow from disposition; and plainly from a disposition *to do good:* this, and a disposition to do evil, being the only active and productive principles in the whole nature of things. A disposition to gain happiness from others, could plainly produce nothing; and were there no other, the universe would be a blank, a desert, in which enjoyment could never be found. The capacity for it would indeed exist; but the means of filling it would be wanting. The channels would open, and wind; but the living fountain, with which they were to be supplied, would be dry. The soil would be formed; and the seeds might be sown; but the life-giving influence of the rain and the sunshine would be withholden. Of course, no verdure, flowers, nor fruits, would spring up, to adorn, and enrich, the immense and desolate surface.

As great, therefore, as the difference is between the boundless good which exists, and for ever will exist, in the great kingdom of

Jehovah, and an absolute barrenness and dearth throughout this incomprehensible field; so great is the difference between these two dispositions.

II. *Virtue, the supreme excellence and glory of Intelligent beings, is merely the love of doing good.*

No attribute of a rational nature is, probably, so much commended, even in this sinful world, as Virtue; yet the commendations, given of it, are, in many instances at least, unmeaning and confused; as if those who extol it had no definite ideas of its nature, and knew not in what its real value consists.

All the worth of Virtue, in my own view, *lies in this; that it is the original, or voluntary, and universal, source of happiness;* partly, as its affections are happy in themselves, and partly, as they are the sources of all other happiness. *There is, originally, nothing valuable, but happiness.* The value of Virtue consists only in its efficacy to produce happiness. This is its value in the Creator: this is its value in its creatures. Hence, and hence only, is Virtue the ornament, the excellency, and the loveliness, of Intelligent beings.

Virtue, as exercised towards the Creator is, as was shown in a former discourse, summed up IN LOVE TO HIM; *in Benevolence, Complacency, and Gratitude:* good-will to his supreme blessedness, and to the accomplishment of his glorious designs; a delight in his perfect character, which forms, and accomplishes, the boundless good of his Creation; and a thankful reception and acknowledgment, of the effects of his goodness, communicated either to ourselves, or to others. All these are affections in the highest degree active; and prompt us to *study what we shall render to the Lord for his benefits*, and to co-operate with all our powers in the promotion of the designs which he has made known to us. *All the good*, indeed, *which we can do to him*, if it may be called by this name, *is no other than to please him;* by exhibiting always a disposition like his own. With this disposition he is ever delighted; and he has been pleased to inform us, that *in his sight it is of great price.*

Virtue, as exercised towards our fellow-creatures, is the same love directed to them, and perfectly active in promoting their well-being.

In all the forms of justice, faithfulness, truth, kindness, compassion, charity, and forgiveness, in every act of self-denial and self-government, this is still the soul and substance. But Virtue is a character, beyond comprehension superior to any other, and in a literal sense infinitely more desirable. It is the only worth, the only excellence, the only beauty, of the mind; the only dignity; the only glory.

To the spirit, which is occupied *in gaining good from others*, or which aims at enjoyment merely, it is transcendently superior, in numerous particulars

It is the source of all internal, moral good.

The mind is a world of itself; in which happiness, of a high and refined kind, can exist: a happiness, without which external good can be but of little value. In the great business of forming happiness, its first concern is with itself. If disorder, tumult, and tempest, reign within: order, peace, and serenity, from without, will find no admission. The first step towards real good is self-approbation. So long as the mind is necessitated to see itself deformed, odious, and contemptible; so long as the conscience reproaches and stings; so long as the affections are inordinate, base, insincere, rebellious, impious, selfish, and guilty; so long as fraud is cherished, truth rejected, sin loved, and duty opposed; it is impossible, that quiet consolation, or hope, should find a residence there. Self-condemned, self-abhorred, self-despised, it must fly of design, from all conversation with itself; and find its poor and transient pleasure in the forgetfulness of what it is, and in the hurry and bustle of external employments and companions. From the sweet and peaceful fireside of harmonious and happy affections and purposes; from the household serenity of a satisfied conscience, and of a blameless life, it is forced abroad, to seek, without success, to slake its thirst for happiness in streets and taverns, in routs and riots. Sickly, pained, and languishing, it looks for health and ease, in medicines which cannot reach the disease, and turns in vain for relief to sports and sounds, for which it has neither eye, nor ear.

But when the love of doing good has once gained dominion over the man, he is become reconciled to his Creator, and to all his commands. This ruling disposition, wholly excellent and lovely in itself, is of course *seen to be lovely and excellent.* The Conscience smiles with approbation on all the dictates of the heart. The mind becomes at once assured of its own amiableness and worth; and, surveying the landscape within, beholds it formed of scenes exquisitely beautiful and desirable. The soul, barren and desolate before, is clothed, by the influence of the Moral Sun, and the rain of heaven, with living verdure, and with blossoms and fruits of righteousness. All is pleasant; all is lovely to the eye. No tumult ruffles, no storm agitates. Peace sooths and hushes every disordered affection, and banishes every uneasy purpose; and serenity, like the summer evening, spreads a soft and mild lustre over the cheerful region. Possessed of new and real dignity, and assuming the character of a rational being, the man for the first time enjoys *himself;* and finds this enjoyment not only new, but noble and expansive; and, while it furnishes perpetually varied and exquisite good, it sweetens and enhances, all other good. From his happiness within, the transition to that which he finds without, is easy and instinctive. Of one part of this, himself is the immediate parent. When he surveys the objects, to whom he has communicated happiness by relieving their distresses, or originating their enjoyments; the first thing, which

naturally strikes his attention, is, *that their happiness is the work of his own hands.* In the exalted character of a benefactor, a voluntary and virtuous benefactor, he surveys and approves himself; not with pride and self-righteousness, but with humble gratitude to God, for vouchsafing to raise him up to such exaltation and worth, and to make him a willing instrument, in his hand, of the good of his fellow-creatures.

In this character, the man, who seeks happiness *in gaining good*, has no share. A child of sense, a mere animal, his only business has been to taste and to swallow; while nobler and more active beings have been employed in producing the food, on which he regales his appetite.

In this character of a common benefactor, the virtuous man is seen, and acknowledged, by others, as well as by himself. By all who see him he is approved; and by the wise and good he is beloved. Conscience owns his worth; Virtue esteems and loves it; and the public testimony repeats and applauds it. To the world he is considered as a blessing; and his memory survives the grave, fragrant and delightful to succeeding generations.

In the mean time, those, who are most unlike him in character, pay an involuntary testimony to his worth. Whenever they seek esteem and commendation, they are obliged to profess his character, and to counterfeit his principles; to pretend to do good, and to seem to love the employment. In this conduct they unwillingly declare, that there is no honour, and no worth, even in their view, beside *that*, of which his character is formed.

In addition to these things, he is daily conscious of the approbation of God; a privilege, a blessing, transcending all other blessings; a good, which knows no bounds of degree or duration. The proofs, given of his approbation to this character, are such, as leave no room for doubt, or question. It is, he has declared it to be, his own character. *God is Love.* His law has demanded it, as the only article of obedience to himself. *Love is the fulfilling of the Law.* To this character, as formed in the soul through the redemption of Christ, all his promises are made. In consequence of the existence of this character, sin is forgiven; the soul justified; and the man adopted into the divine family as a child of God, and an heir of eternal life. Of the approbation of God, therefore, he is secure. Think, I beseech you, of the nature of this enjoyment. Think of the character of him who approves. Think what it is to be approved by infinite Wisdom. What a seal of worth; what a source of dignity; what a foundation of honour! How virtuous an ambition may be here gratified; what an immense capacity for happiness may here be filled!

Beyond the grave, his excellence will find a complete reward. There, all around him will be wise and good; and will joyfully feel and acknowledge, will esteem and applaud, his worth. Of their esteem, and love, the testimonies will be sincere, undisguised, un-

changed, and eternal. There he will be acknowledged, and welcomed, as one of the virtuous and happy number, who have voluntarily glorified God, and befriended the Universe, during their earthly prilgrimage; and who are destined to the same delightful employments, and to the same glorious character, for ever. His heavenly Father will also there testify his own divine approbation, in an open, full, and perfect manner; will adorn him with every grace; remove from him every stain; and advance him through successive stages of excellence, which shall know no end.

It is the actual, and probably the necessary, law of Intelligent nature, that we love those, to whom we *do good*, more than those *who do good to us*. Thus God loves his Intelligent creatures incomparably more, than they can love him. Thus, the Saviour loved mankind far more intensely, than his most faithful disciples ever loved him. Thus parents regard their children with a strength of affection unknown in children towards their parents. Thus friends love those, whom they have befriended, more than those, who have befriended *them*. Thus also in other, and probably in all, cases. According to this undeniable scheme of things, he who seeks his happiness in doing good, is bound to his fellow-creatures, and to the universe, and will be eternally bound, by far stronger, and tenderer ties, than can otherwise exist. He will contemplate every fellow-creature, primarily, as an object of his own beneficence; and, while he feels a parental, a godlike, attachment to all, will enjoy a delight in their prosperity, not unjustly styled divine. This glorious disposition will make the happiness of every being his own, as parents make that of their children. Even in this world, he will thus multiply enjoyment, in a manner unknown to all others; and in the world to come, will, in a progress for ever increasing and enlarging, find the most pure and exquisite delight springing up in his bosom, wherever he dwells and wherever he roves. His mind, a bright, and polished mirror, will receive the light of the Sun of Righteousness, and of all the stars which adorn the heavenly firmament; and will, at the same time, warm and brighten within itself, and return the enlivening beams with undiminished lustre.

III. *To do good is the only and perfect character of the ever-blessed Jehovah.*

When God created the universe, it is most evident, that he could have no possible view in this great work, but *to glorify himself in doing good to the creatures which he made*. Whatever they were, and whatever they possessed, or could ever be, or possess, must of course be derived from him alone. From them, therefore, he could receive nothing, but what he had given them. Accordingly, *he is not worshipped as though he needed any thing; seeing he giveth unto all life, and breath, and all things*. The whole system of his designs and conduct is a mere system of communicating good; and his whole character as displayed in it, is exactly summed up by

the Psalmist in these few words: *Thou art good, and dost good, and thy tender mercies are over all thy works.* The same character was anciently proclaimed by himself to *Moses*, on *Mount Sinai*, in that sublime and affecting annunciation: *the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth.* *St. John* has, in a still more comprehensive manner declared his character in a single word: *God is Love.* This peculiarly divine and glorious character was still more illustriously manifested by the Son of God, in the wonderful work of Redemption. Infinitely *rich* in all good himself, *for our sakes he became poor, that we through him might become rich;* rich in holiness; rich in the happiness which it produces. We were fallen, condemned, and ruined; *were poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and in want of all things.* To do good to us, to redeem us from sin, and to rescue us from misery, he came to this world; and while he lived, *went about doing good unto all men as he had opportunity*, and ended his life on the cross, that we might live for ever.

On the third day he arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. At the right hand of God the Father, while he sits on the throne of the Universe, he makes perpetual intercession for the sinful, backsliding creatures, whom he left behind; and with infinite benignity carries on the amazing work of redeeming love, in the world of glory. In that world it is his employment, and delight, *to feed* all his followers, *and lead them to fountains of living waters;* to enlighten them with wisdom, to improve them in Virtue, to adorn them with strength and beauty, and to dignify them with immortal glory.

All these things have flowed, and will for ever flow, from his own love of doing good. Of them, he could not possibly stand in need. *Of the stones* of the street, he could raise up *children* and followers, beyond measure better, wiser, and nobler, than they are, and in numbers incomprehensible. For him they can do nothing; for them he does all things.

But God is infinitely blessed. This superior and unchangeable happiness of *Jehovah* springs entirely from this glorious disposition. As he can receive nothing, his happiness must lie wholly in the conscious enjoyment of his own excellence, which is formed of this disposition, and in the communication of good to his creatures.

If *we* would be happy like *Him*, we must be disposed like him; must experience, and exercise, the same love of doing good; and must find our own supreme enjoyment in this exalted communication. Happiness grows out of the temper of the mind which enjoys. Its native soil is benevolence. When this is the temperature of the soul, it springs up spontaneously, and flourishes, and blossoms, and bears, with a rich and endless luxuriance, and with beauty supreme and transcendent: but when selfishness predominates,

like an exotic in a sterile ground, and a wintry climate, it withers, fades, and dies.

In the mean time, God loves, and blesses, those, whose disposition and conduct resemble his own. In giving this character to his children, he gives them the first of all blessings; the source of peace, dignity, and enjoyment, within, and the means of relishing every pleasure from without. Thus, in the possession of this character, *they have*, in the scriptural language; and therefore, *to them*, in other respects, *shall be largely given*. Their internal excellence and enjoyment shall be perpetually improved, and their external happiness, in the like manner, extended. As the mind becomes more beneficent, more pure, more active in doing good; all the sources of its felicity will multiply around it; its consciousness of being like its Father and Redeemer will expand and refine; virtuous beings will more clearly see, approve, and love, its beauty and worth; and the smiles of infinite complacency will beam upon its character and conduct with inexpressible and transporting glory.

Having thus, as I flatter myself, shown in a clear light the truth of the Doctrine, contained in the text; I shall now close the discourse with two

REMARKS.

1st. *This doctrine places in the strongest point of view the Superiority of the Gospel to every other system of morals.*

There are two classes of men, both very numerous, who have employed themselves in forming moral systems for mankind: viz. the ancient Heathen Philosophers, and modern Infidels. It is hardly necessary to observe, that in all moral systems the Supreme Good, or highest interest of Man, and, by consequence, the Nature of Virtue, and the Nature and Means of Happiness, become, of course, prime objects of inquiry. Nothing can more effectually teach us the insufficiency of the human mind to determine the nature of the Supreme Good than the declaration of *Varro* that *the heathen Philosophers had embraced, within his knowledge, two hundred and eighty-eight different opinions concerning this important subject.* Nor were their sentiments concerning the nature of Virtue and the nature and means of Happiness, as will be easily supposed, at all more harmonious. Some of them taught that sensual pleasure is the chief good of man; that it consists in freedom from trouble and pain; and that business and cares do not consist with happiness; and therefore, that a man ought not to marry, because a family will give him trouble; nor engage in public business; nor meddle with the concerns of the public. They also taught, that nothing, which is in itself pleasurable, is an evil; and that when it is evil, it is so, only because it brings more trouble with it than pleasure; that, therefore, injustice is not an evil in itself, but is evil merely on account of the trouble which it occasions to its author. Some of them placed their supreme happiness in pride, and per-

sonal independence of both gods and men. Apathy, or an absolute want of feeling with respect to our own troubles, and those of our fellow-men, was regarded as being essential to this independence. Some of them placed happiness in abstraction from the world; in study; in contemplation; in quietude of mind; in indolence of body; in seclusion from human society; in wealth, power, fame, superiority of talents, and military glory. Of Virtue they appear to have formed no distinct, or definite, conceptions. In some instances, they spoke of it with propriety and truth; but, in others, with such confusion, as to prove, that they were without any correct and satisfactory apprehensions concerning its nature: the several things which they taught, being utterly inconsistent with each other. Different Philosophers placed Virtue in the love, and pursuit, of most of the things, mentioned above, and made it consist with injustice; impurity; impiety; fraud; falsehood; the desertion of parents in their old age; unkindness to children; insensibility to the distresses of our fellow-creatures; and generally with a dereliction of almost every thing, which the Scriptures have declared to be virtuous.

These observations are sufficient to show how infinitely remote these philosophers were from just conceptions concerning this inestimable subject.

Infidels have left this important concern of man, substantially as they found it. I cannot, at the present time, attempt to repeat their various doctrines. It will be sufficient to observe, at the present time, that *Mr. Hume*, one of the last and ablest of them, has taught us in form, that Modesty, Humility, Repentance of sin, and the forgiveness of injuries, are vices; and that pride, therefore, impudence, resentment, revenge, and obstinacy in sin, are by necessary consequence, virtues. This scheme needs no comment. Virtue, such as this, would lay the world waste, and render him who possessed it a fiend.

From what a glorious height do the Scriptures look down on this grovelling, deformed, self-contradictory chaos of opinions! How sublime is the scheme which they exhibit concerning this amazing subject! *Virtue*, they inform us, *is the love of doing good:* an active principle; the real and whole Energy of an Intelligent mind, exerted for the exalted purpose of producing happiness. In the exertions of this principle, in the enjoyment which attends it, and in the happiness which it creates, the Scriptures place the supreme good of man, and of every other Intelligent being. Here, and here only, is it placed with true wisdom, and immoveable certainty. The mind in this manner is happy, within, by its self-approbation; and, without, by being in the highest degree useful to others, and by receiving from the hand of others all the good, which the same Usefulness in them can return to itself. Here all the provision, which is either possible, or desirable, is made for enjoyment unmingled and complete. The character, the personal character,

becomes glorious; the affections delightful; the conduct divine. In a community, governed by this principle, every individual, however great, or however small, is honourable and lovely, both in his own sight, and that of others: every one is useful, also: every one is happy.

2dly. *The great practical inference from this doctrine is, that doing good is the only proper Employment of man.*

You, my Friends and Brethren, were created for this great purpose; not to gain reputation, learning, wealth, knowledge, power, honour, or pleasure; but to do good; not to gain even heaven itself, or immortal life; but to ascend to heaven, and to acquire immortal life, that in that happy world you may employ the immense of duration in an endless diffusion of beneficence, and an endless exercise of piety and praise. Make, then, the end for which God designed your existence, and your faculties. the voluntary and proper end of all your wishes, designs, and labours.

With sober and affecting meditation set it before yourselves in form, and system, as the purpose for which you were made, endowed, preserved, and blessed hitherto; as the purpose, which is prescribed by the will of God; and as the purpose, to which you are, therefore, voluntarily, and supremely, to devote yourselves. Let each of you say to himself, "I was formed for the great and glorious purpose of doing good. This was the will of my Maker; it is my own supreme interest; it is the supreme interest of my fellow-creatures in *me*. Be this, then, the ultimate end of all my thoughts, wishes, and labours; and let nothing hinder me from pursuing it always. While I lawfully seek for reputation, property, learning, eloquence, power, or any other earthly good, I am resolved to seek them, only in subordination to this great purpose; as means, merely, to this end. To form, and to execute, this resolution, give me grace, wisdom, and strength, O thou Father of all mercies! that I may perform thy holy will, and in some measure resemble thy perfect and glorious character, through Jesus Christ. Amen."

This solemn proposition of the subject to yourselves would, almost of course, give it a distinction and importance in your view, which would induce you to keep it supremely, and habitually, in sight, and render it a standard, to which all your conduct would be referred for approbation or rejection; a moral scale, by which you would measure every thought, and pursuit; a touchstone by which you would distinguish every species of alloy from the most fine gold. It would, also, direct your aims to a higher mark; and give your efforts a nobler character. Men usually, even good men, rather compound in their affections with conscience, and the Scriptures, for a mixture of worldliness and virtue, than insist on observing nothing, but the dictates of virtue. They aim at being virtuous, and not at being only, and eminently, virtuous. One reason for this is, they take it for granted, that they shall never cease to sin, in

the present world, and, therefore, never mistrust either how practicable, or how important it is, that they should vigorously determine to avoid all sin, and practice nothing but virtue. Their designs are divided between their worldly business and Religion. These they consider as two separate, and in a degree incoherent, objects; both necessary, but still clashing; when they ought to consider their worldly business merely as one great dictate, and duty, of Religion; one great branch of the virtue, which they are to exhibit, and of the good, which they are to do. Worldly business is to be done; but it is to be done only as a part of our religion and duty. Even our amusements are always to be regarded in this manner; and are useful, and lawful, only as parts of our duty, and as means of enabling us better to perform other duties, of higher importance. From exact obedience to the great rule, *Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*, there is no exemption.

Were the solemn proposition which I have urged, to be formed, and habitually kept in sight; the character of man would soon be, not sinless indeed, but incomparably more *holy, blameless, and undefiled*, than we now usually find it. Human Virtue would be less clouded; would assume a brighter and more celestial aspect; and would be gilded with a clearer and more genial sunshine.

In whatever sphere of life you are placed, employ all your powers, and all your means of doing good, as diligently and vigorously as you can. Direct your efforts to the well-being of those who are within your reach, and not to the inhabitants of a distant age, or country; of a future generation, or of China or Peru. Neglect not a humble kind office within your power, for a vast and sublime one, which you cannot accomplish. The Scriptures require you to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked; to instruct the ignorant, and reclaim the vicious. Philosophical philanthropy calls to the commiseration of nations, the overthrow of governments, the improvement of the vast society of Man, and the exaltation of this wretched world to freedom, science, and happiness. The only objection to your labouring in this magnificent field seems to be, that your labours will be to no purpose. On the Scriptural plan, you will at least do something; and your two mites will not be forgotten. Extend your efforts, however, as far as you can extend them, to any effect; to as many, and as great objects, as Providence places within your reach; and as many ways as you shall find in your power. Promote, as much as possible, relief, comfort, health, knowledge, virtue, and happiness, both as private and public objects. Promote them by your talents, your property, your influence, your labours, and your example. Let every day, when passing in review before the scrutinizing eye of conscience, present a regular series of beneficence, which will soften the bed of your repose, and rise as a sweet memorial before God.

As objects of your kindness, always select the most deserving. The Scriptures have directed you to *do good unto all men, and especially to those of the household of faith.* To the soundness of this precept common sense bears, also, the fullest attestation. It was reserved for philosophy to discern, that the true and proper scenes of employing benevolence were the galley and the gaol; and that its chief aim should be not to make men good and virtuous, but to prevent thieves, murderers, and traitors from coming to the dungeon or the gibbet, which they had merited. Let your favourite object be the honest, the industrious, the sober, the virtuous; and both feel, and relieve, their distresses. Refuse not others; but give to these an universal preference. When you relieve the sufferings of the vicious and infamous, close your beneficence with solemn reproof, and pungent counsel; and remember, if you withdraw them from vice to virtue, you render them a kindness, infinitely greater, than if you elevate them to wealth and honour. In this way you will save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins.

With all your resolutions and efforts, you will need, every day, assistance from God. Every day, ask it in humble, fervent prayer. No real blessing ever descends to man, but as an answer to prayer. Particularly this rich and glorious blessing of a life patiently spent in well-doing, cannot be expected unless it be asked for. Three times a day retire with Daniel to your chambers. God will be there, and will grant you a glorious answer of peace.

To such a life can you want motives? Let me remind you, that *it is*, and, I flatter myself, it has been proved to be, *not only the most honourable, but the only honourable, character;* the character, which secures the secret approbation of those who do not assume it; and the open esteem, love, and praise, of those who do: that it is the only character, which is truly and eminently happy; which possesses peace within, and enjoyment without; which is found in heaven, and constitutes the happiness of that exalted world: that it is the character of Angels, of Christ, and of God; the beauty of the divine kingdom, the glory of Jehovah, and the source of all the good, which is enjoyed in Immensity and Eternity.

It is the only character, which will endure. The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he who doeth the will of God abideth for ever. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, the wretched inventory of a selfish, worldly mind, find all their poor, though boasted, gratifications on this side of the grave. Their miserable possessors riot, and dig, and climb, during their passing day; and then vanish, and are seen no more: where will they next be found?

He, on the contrary, *who by patient continuance in well-doing hath sought for glory, honour, and immortality*, will lie down in the bed of peace, will *fall asleep in the Lord Jesus*, and awake

with new life, and glory, beyond the grave. In the great trial, he will be found, and pronounced, to have *well done*, and to have been *a good and faithful servant* of his divine Master; and will be directed to *enter into the joy of his Lord.*

In the great and final day, he will be acquitted, acknowledged, and glorified, before the assembled universe; because, when the least of Christ's brethren was *an hungered, he gave him meat; when he was thirsty, he gave him drink; when he was a stranger, he took him in; when he was naked, he clothed him; when he was sick, and in prison, he ministered unto him.* Of so high and valuable a nature will he find this beneficence, that it will be received, and rewarded, by Christ, as done to himself. To heaven he will be an acceptable inhabitant; and meet with *an open and abundant entrance* into that happy world. Glorified saints will there hail him as their brother: Angels will welcome him as their companion. There, also, will he find, that he has begun a career of excellence, which will never end. Endued, there, with stronger principles and nobler powers, in a happier field, with more desirable companions, and forming all his plans of beneficence for eternal duration, he will fill up the succession of ages with a glorious and immortal progress of doing good; and become daily a brighter, a more perfect, a more divine, ornament, and blessing, to the virtuous universe.

And now, my friends and brethren, *I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up in* this evangelical character, *and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.* Amen.

SERMON XCVIII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE SECOND GREAT COMMANDMENT.—THE EFFECTS OF BENEVOLENCE ON PUBLIC HAPPINESS.

ACTS XX. 35.—*I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring, ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give, than to receive.*

IN a preceding discourse, I considered, at length, *the Influence of a disposition to do good on the personal happiness of him, in whom it exists;* and attempted to show, that *this disposition is more productive, than any other, of such happiness.* It is now my design to prove, that *it possesses a no less superior efficacy in producing Public happiness; or the happiness of Society in all its various forms.*

Of this disposition, commonly styled *disinterested Benevolence*, and denoted in the New Testament by the word, Αγαπη, rendered in our translation *Love*, and *Charity*, we have an extensive, most accurate, and most beautiful, description in the 13th chapter of the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*. In this chapter, it is exhibited to be superior to every natural and supernatural endowment, and to every acquisition made by man. It is proved to be the source of all good, natural and moral; or rather the source of all natural, and the substance of all moral, good. It is shown to be the only real excellence of intelligent creatures; the means of their existence, and their continuance, in the kingdom, of God; and the only cause of his complacency in their character. Finally, it is declared, that this disposition shall endure until all other things, which are admired and esteemed by men, shall be forgotten; and, when they shall have ceased, together with their use and importance, shall brighten and flourish for ever.

Generally, it is declared, if I mistake not, in this chapter, that Love, in its various modifications and exercises, is the amount of all those, which are commonly called the graces of the Christian spirit; or, as they are often styled, the Christian virtues. Particularly, it is exhibited to us as long-suffering, contentment, modesty, humility, decency, disinterestedness, meekness, charitableness, hatred of iniquity, love to truth, patience, faith, hope, and fortitude. With this, the most extended and the most detailed, account of the subject, furnished by the Scriptures, all the other exhibitions, contained in the sacred volume, perfectly agree. In them all, when connected together by the mind, as may without difficulty be perceived, this great truth is abundantly shown: viz.

that the Love of the Gospel, or the spirit of doing good, is the source of all happiness, public and private; and is productive, intentionally, of no unnecessary evil.

This truth is generally, but forcibly, taught in the text, with regard to society, as well as with regard to individuals. If we remember, that all societies are composed of individuals; we cannot hesitate to admit, that whatever renders them happy, must in exactly the same manner, and degree, be the source of public happiness. If *it is more blessed to give, than to receive, if it is more blessed to cherish a spirit of doing good to others, than a disposition to gain it from them*, in individual instances; the community, in which this disposition universally reigned, could not fail to enjoy this superior happiness in its fullest extent.

Equally manifest is it, that the same disposition could not be productive of evil. *Love*, saith *St. Paul, worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore Love is the fulfilling of the Law.* In other words, this great and glorious characteristic of love, that it is productive of no ill, rendered it an object of such excellence to the view of God, that he framed his law in such a manner, as to require nothing of his intelligent creatures, beside this attribute and its proper exercises. We are not indeed to suppose this the only reason, why the divine law was framed in this manner. The *good, of which this disposition is the parent*, was, as we are abundantly taught in the Scriptures, a commanding reason also, why it was required by the law of God. To secure this good, and prevent in this manner the existence of the evil, which would necessarily result from any other disposition, was, at the same time, supremely glorious to the Infinite Lawgiver.

It cannot fail of being an interesting employment to a Christian assembly to contemplate the operations of this spirit upon human society. In the progress of such contemplation, so many blessings will rise up to our view; and will be so easily seen to flow necessarily from this disposition; that we cannot fail to feel deeply the degraded, mischievous, miserable nature of that selfishness, which is so directly contrasted to it, and which so generally controls the affections and conduct of man. With scarcely less strength shall we realize, also, the excellence and amiableness of that spirit, from which good so extensively flows; which makes heaven the residence of supreme enjoyment; and which might make even this melancholy world no unworthy resemblance of heaven.

On a theme, so extensive as this, and comprehending such a vast multitude of particulars, it would be easy to make many important observations. Those which fall within the compass of my design must, however, be all included within the limits of a single discourse. They will, therefore, be few, and of necessity general.

I. *Evangelical Love, or the Spirit of communicating happiness, will, of course, induce us to be contented with our own Providential allotments.*

Love, saith *St. Paul*, *envieth not. Love seeketh not her own.*

It is easily demonstrated by Reason, as well as abundantly declared in the Scriptures, that the infinitely wise and benevolent God orders all things aright. *Thus saith the* LORD, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this; that he understandeth and knoweth me; that I am the* LORD *which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the* LORD. With such a government as this, it is evident, all persons ought to be satisfied: for all persons clearly ought to wish, that that which is righteous, wise, and benevolent, should be invariably done. He who is dissatisfied, therefore, cannot, without voluntary blindness, fail to discern, that in this temper he is guilty of sin. At the same time, the good man is taught, and will from interest and duty, alike, remember, that *all things work together for good to them that love God;* and therefore, for good to him, as being one of this happy number. Such a man, with this conviction, must be contented of course. His understanding, prepared alway to admit the dictates of truth, and his heart, always ready to welcome them, demand, and generate, a contented spirit. In such a man discontentment with his own situation, and envy on account of the superior enjoyments of others, can find no place, unless when *the law in the members, warring against the law of the mind, brings him into captivity.* Were his love, therefore, perfect; his contentment would be also perfect.

The importance of this disposition to the happiness of man, may be advantageously illustrated by calling up to our view the immense evils, which spring from discontentment. How vast is their number; how terrible their nature! What hatred does it generate towards our fellow-creatures; what wrath; what contention; what revenge! How many slanders does it produce; how many frauds! What a multitude of perjuries, litigations, murders, and wars! What a mass of guilt does it create! What an accumulation of misery! Were the great men of this world, alone, to be satisfied with the wealth, splendour, and power, allotted to them; were they to thirst no more for the enjoyments, bestowed on their rivals; the whole face of this earthly system would in a great measure be changed. Oppression would break his iron rod; and war would cease to ravage the habitations of men.

In producing these evils, it is impossible for a mind, governed by the spirit of doing good, to take any share. Such a mind must of necessity rejoice in the righteous and benevolent dispensations of God. All these it would regard, as springing from his perfect character, and as accomplishing his perfect designs. Its own al-

lotments, therefore, it would consider as the best possible, upon the whole, for the time, and the circumstances; because they were determined by this wisdom and goodness. If a man, possessed of such a mind, were afflicted; he would *not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when he was rebuked of him;* but he would remember, that *whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and* that he *scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* In this character of a son, with filial affection, and reverence, to *the Father of his spirit*, while thus employed in the eminently parental office of *chastening him for his good*, he would sustain his afflictions with patience, fortitude, and submission; would endeavour to derive, and would certainly derive, from them, *the peaceable fruits of righteousness.* His mind would become more and more serene, patient, and enduring; more sensible of his dependence on God; more resigned to his disposal; and more intimately possessed of *fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.* Every day, and by means of every affliction, he would become more weaned from the world, more spiritually-minded, less dependent for his happiness on outward objects, and more effectually sustained by the peace and joy of the Gospel. In such a mind, passion would daily lose its inordinate and mischievous dominion; and reason, conscience, and piety, daily increase theirs. The views, and feelings, which assimilate him to an animal, would gradually lessen; and those, which constitute him a rational being, continually increase. The distinction in the scale of moral existence, for which he was originally formed, he would gradually acquire; and in the end would find himself an inhabitant of heaven, fitted by a wholesome discipline for an immediate participation of its pure and unfading enjoyments.

In prosperity, the same man would acknowledge God as the giver of all his blessings. The enjoyments allotted to him, he would regard not as acquired from his Maker by bargain and sale, purchased by works which himself had wrought, and earned by his own industry and ingenuity; but as gifts, descending from the Author of all good, as sovereign and merciful communications from the eternal Benefactor. To this Benefactor all his affections, prayers, and praises, would ascend: and the character, which this glorious Being would sustain in the view of such a mind, would be the proper and transcendent character of JEHOVAH.

It is the lot of all men to be more, or less, injured by their fellow-men. In the sufferance of these injuries, most men become impatient, angry, and revengeful; and usually look no farther, while smarting under the infliction, than to the hand, from which it is immediately derived. But such a mind will remember, that the injuries, done by men, are also Providential chastisements from God, directed by the highest wisdom, and accomplishing the most desirable purposes. However untoward, therefore, however painful, his sufferings may seem for a season; he will consider them,

chiefly, as necessary parts of a perfect Providence, and as real, though mysterious means, of accomplishing perfect good. In this view, they will appear comparatively light; and will be sustained with equanimity, and even with comfort. The promises of the Gospel, ever present, and ever fresh, will steadily furnish additional and abundant consolation. In these, he will find his own good secured beyond defeat; and will *both hope, and quietly wait for, the salvation of God.* Fashioned, and tempered, in this manner, into submission, patience, and meekness, *the work of righteousness will*, in such a mind, *be peace; and the effects of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever.*

In this vast particular, therefore, extending to so many objects, spreading its influence over all the days and hours of life, man would gain, beyond measure, by assuming this divine disposition. The spirit of doing good would be, in his bosom, *a well of water, flowing out unto everlasting life.* The delightful nature of benevolent affections, the animating enjoyment inherent in beneficence, would gild with sunshine the gloom of affliction, and add new beauty and splendour to seasons of prosperity. Towards God it would be exercised in the whole course of diversified obedience; particularly in complacency and gratitude, reverence and resignation; the proper efforts of a good mind to *render to him according to his benefits.* Towards man, it would operate in the production of happiness, and the relief of distress; the employment of God himself, and peculiarly the source of his own infinite happiness. Thus would it unceasingly do good, and gain good: and, while he, who was the subject of it, diffused enjoyment through his own bosom, he would extend it also to all around him.

It has doubtless been observed, that I have illustrated this subject, hitherto, by applying it to the circumstances of *an individual.* It is hardly necessary to remark, that what is thus true of one man must be equally true of all others, who are governed by the same spirit. This contentment, therefore, this serenity, this exquisite enjoyment, would, if such a disposition universally prevailed, be felt by a whole community, and diffused over the world. Every man would thus act; thus gain; thus enjoy. What a mass of happiness would in this manner be accumulated; and how would the darkness of this melancholy world be changed into a glorious resemblance of everlasting day!

II. *The same spirit would do Justice to all men.*

Love rejoiceth not in iniquity.

Justice is either Commutative, or *Distributive.* Commutative justice is *rendering an equivalent for what we receive, whether of property, or kind offices.* Distributive justice is *the rendering of such rewards, as are due to those who obey law, and government, and of such punishments, as are due to those who disobey and rebel.* In both senses, Justice is the *mere measure of benevolence.* What a change would be wrought in this world by an exact fulfilment of

Commutative Justice only! With what astonishment should we see every debt paid at the time, and in the manner, in which it was due! every promise faithfully fulfilled! every loan of money, utensils, or other property, returned without injury or delay! every commodity sold according to its real value, and that value truly declared! every character carefully and justly defended, and none unjustly attacked! every kindness gratefully felt, and exactly requited! How great a part of human corruptions would cease! How great a part of the customary litigations would be swept away! What a multitude of prosecutions would vanish! What a host of hard bargains, cheats, and jockeys, would be driven from among men! How soon would the judge find himself enjoying a comparative sinecure, and the jail crumble into ruin for want of inhabitants!

But this mighty change would be still increased by the reign of Distributive Justice. In its Laws, the Legislature would regard only the good of its subjects. In his decisions, the Judge, and in his administrations, the Executive Magistrate, would be governed by the same great and general interest. Of course laws would be usefully formed, and equitably administered; and the public peace, approbation, and prosperity, would be uniformly secured.

To the government, the people at large would willingly render the same justice, as being influenced by the same principle. Justice, in an important sense, is due from the people to their rulers; and can be either rendered, or denied. When rendered, much good, and when denied, much evil, is always done to the community. If the Benevolence of the Gospel governed men of all classes, this justice would be rendered cheerfully, and universally. Strong in the public confidence, Rulers would be at full liberty to devise, and pursue, every useful measure, without danger of slander or opposition, without faction or tumult. The community would be a great and happy family, peaceful, harmonious, and safe; and, at the head of it, Magistrates would be the common parents, actuated by no design, and busied in no employment, but to render themselves as useful, and the people as happy, as was in their power. How different such a nation from those, that have hitherto existed in this tumultuous world!

III. *The same spirit would invariably speak Truth.*

Love, saith *St. Paul*, *rejoiceth in the truth.*

Truth is the basis of society, in all worlds where society exists. Angels could not be social without it. Thieves and robbers support their dreadful social state by speaking it to each other. To be social beings at all, we must exercise confidence. But we cannot confide, where truth is not spoken. Lying, in all its forms, is the gangrene of society; and corrupts the mass just so far as it spreads. The sense of falsehood is a sense of danger; a sense of danger is distress. Suspicion, jealousy, hatred, malignant de-

signs, and the dreadful execution of those designs, grow, successively, out of deception. Under the united dominion of these evils, the mind, in which they exist, becomes gradually a seat of wo; a haunt of dreadful passions and dreadful expectations. In the progress of intellectual nature, a world of beings thus situated, would be a collection of fiends; and convert their residence into a hell. On this globe, where much truth is spoken, and where falsehood is only mixed; where the spirit, and the art, of deceiving are imperfect; a great part of our sufferings, as well as of our sins, is formed by violations of truth.

What a mighty and glorious change would at once be accomplished in the circumstances of mankind, were truth to become their only and universal language! Were no false facts hereafter to be declared, no false arguments to be alleged, no false doctrines to be taught, no false pretentions to be made, no false friendships to be professed, and no false colourings to be employed, to discourage and deform truth; what a host of villains would vanish! What a multitude of impositions, treacheries, and distresses, would fade out of the picture of human wo!

To realize the nature, and extent, of this mighty change, cast your eyes, for a moment, over the face of this melancholy world. Behold all the interests of Man exposed, and hazarded; his peace invaded; his purposes frustrated; his business ruined; and his hopes blasted, by the various votaries of falsehood: his private affairs molested by lying servants; his friendship abused by treacherous friends; his good name dishonoured by slanderous neighbours; his learning and science perverted by philosophists; his rights and privileges wrested from him by fraudulent governments; and his salvation prevented by religious impostors. How immense is the abuse, which he suffers; how comprehensive; how minute: spreading every where, and reaching to every thing, which is important, which is dear to the heart! Thieves and robbers conceal, and accomplish, their malignant invasions of property and happiness under the darkness of midnight; and fly with terror and haste the detecting eye of day. The wretches, of whom I have spoken, shroud themselves in moral darkness, and equally dread the exploring beams of truth. Were this glorious light of the universe to burst the clouds which envelope our darkened world, and exhibit in clear and distinct view all things as they are; what a host of enemies, what a crowd of spectres would fly from the dreadful detection! See the *Tale-bearer*, hurrying from the indignant hisses of those, whom he has pierced into the innermost parts of the soul! The *Perjurer* shrinks from the abhorrence of those sacred tribunals of justice, which his enormous guilt has dishonoured and defiled; and trembles at the expected infliction of that divine wrath which he has impiously invoked. The *Liar* sneaks from the haunts of man, while infamy pursues his flight with her hiss of contempt, and her whip of scorpions. The *Sophist* immures himself in his

cell, amid the foul animals who are its proper inhabitants: while justice inscribes over the entrance, "*Here is buried the betrayer of the souls of men.*" The *Seducer*, loathed, execrated, torn by a frenzied conscience, and wrung with remorse and agony, hurries out of sight, to find his last refuge among his kindred fiends. Behind them, the whole train of deceivers, appalled, and withered, vanish from the searching beams; and sink down to the regions of darkness and despair. *The* earthly *creation*, which *has groaned, and travailed in pain, together, until now*, under the vast miseries, which these enemies of God and men have wrought, wherever they have roamed, is lightened of the insupportable burden. The gloom disappears; and universal nature smiles *to behold its Redemption drawing nigh.* Tribunals of justice are purified at once. Individuals, families, and neighbourhoods, feel their wounds close; their breaches vanish; and their peace return. Religion rides in triumph through the world; and God is pleased to *dwell anew among men.*

Think not, that I am too ardent in this representation. Falsehood is the first enemy of Intelligent beings. The world was ruined, the human race were murdered at first by a lie. "*The father of lies*," is the appropriate title of the worst of all beings; a title of supreme and eternal infamy, branded by the Almighty hand. All the deceivers who have followed in his train, partake of his character; are slaves, self-sold to toil in his foul and malignant drudgery, and heirs of his undying infamy and wo. *There shall in no wise enter into the city any thing that defileth, or that loveth or maketh a lie;* but on the contrary, *all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.*

Truth, on the other hand, is the foundation, on which rests the Moral Universe; the stability of the divine kingdom; the light of heaven; the glory of Jehovah. *The Truth*, is one of the peculiar names of HIM, *who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.* Truth is the great bond, which unites angels to each other, and to their God; the chain, which binds together the intelligent system; preserving all the parts in harmony and beauty, and arranging the worlds, of which it is composed, around the great Centre of light, happiness, and glory.

IV. *From the same disposition would spring, universally, those Kind Offices, which are its immediate offspring, and which constitute the peculiar amiableness of Intelligent beings.*

Love suffereth long and is kind.

The interchanges of conduct between such beings, are in their nature, and variety, endless. From *inferiors to superiors*, they assume the names of our veneration, homage, respect, reverence, submission, and obedience; together with many others of the same general nature. From *superiors to inferiors*, they are in the like manner varied through all the shades of authority, government,

precept, regard, countenance, favour, compassion, forgiveness, instruction, advice, reproof, and a great variety of similar offices. *Between equals*, they are performed in the more familiar, but not less necessary, acts of friendship, esteem, civility, giving, lending, aiding, and a multitude of others. These, united, constitute a vast proportion of all that excellence, of which Intelligent beings are capable; and of all that duty, for which they are designed by their Creator. To enjoyment, *kindness* is no less necessary, than *truth and justice*. Truth begins, justice regulates, and kindness finishes, rational happiness. Truth is the basis, justice the measure, and kindness the substance. All are alike, and absolutely, indispensable; and of all, Benevolence is the soul, the essence, the amount.

A world of kindness is a copy of heaven. A world without kindness is an image of hell. *Eden* originally derived its beauty and glory from the kind and amiable character of its inhabitants; and the verdure, the bloom, the splendour of all its ornaments, were merely a faint resemblance of the beauty of mind, the moral life and loveliness, which glowed in our first parents. Had they preserved this character; the world would still have continued to flourish with immortal life and beauty; and the character itself would have furnished one natural and desirable ingredient in the happiness of beings, like *them*, who by the nature of their dispositions, were capable of being happy.

Were the same character to revive in the present inhabitants of the world, now in ruins around us; the bloom and beauty of Paradise would spontaneously return. Three fourths of the miseries of man are made by himself; and of these a vast proportion is formed by his unkindness. Were this malignant character banished; were sweetness and tenderness of disposition to return to the human breast, and benevolence once more to regulate human conduct; a lustre and loveliness, hitherto unknown, would be spread over the inanimate creation; and God would supply to our enjoyment all, which would then be lacking.

In the exercise of this disposition, Parents would be truly kind to their children; and would labour not to gratify their pride, avarice, and sensuality, but to do them real and universal good; to form their minds to virtue and happiness, to obedience and endless life, to excellence and loveliness in the sight of God. In the *path* of this true *wisdom* they would walk before; and their offspring, following cheerfully after them, would find it to be only *pleasantness and peace*. Brothers and sisters, under this happy influence, would become brothers and sisters indeed. In their hearts, and on their tongues, would dwell *the law of kindness* to each other, and of piety to their parents. Every *son* would *make a glad father;* no daughter would be *a heaviness to her mother*. Every returning day would assume the peace and serenity of the

Sabbath; and every house would be converted into a little heaven.

From the house, this expansive disposition would enlarge the circuit of its benefactions so, as to comprehend the neighbourhood. Happy within, every family would delight to extend its happiness to all without, who are near enough to know, and to share, its kind offices. The beams of charity would shine from one habitation to another; and every hamlet and village would be formed into a constellation of beauty and splendour. *Peace*, the sister of *Love*, and *Joy*, the third in that delightful family, would be constant visitants at every fireside; and spread their smiles, and their influence, over every collection of human dwellings.

To the poor, the wanderer, and the stranger, every door would be open, to invite them in; every heart would welcome their entrance; and every hand, relieve their wants and distresses. The rich would be rich, only to bless; and the poor would be poor, only to be blessed. The great would employ their *ten talents* in gaining more; and the small, their *one talent* in the same honourable and profitable exchange. Kings and rulers would be, indeed, what they have been styled, but in many instances, without a claim to the character; *the Fathers of their country*. The *iron rod of oppression* would be finally broken, and cast away; and the golden sceptre of love, and peace, and charity, would be extended for the encouragement, and relief, of all who approached. Bribery, intrigue, caballing, and the whole train of public corruptors, would be hissed out of the habitations of men; and the courts of rulers become, not the scenes of guilt and mischief, but the residence of honour, dignity, and Evangelical example.

Nor would this great *bond of perfectness* merely unite the members of a single community with each other; but extending its power, like the attraction of the sun, would join all nations in one common union of peace and good-will. No more would the trumpet summon to arms; no more would the beacon kindle its fires, to spread the alarm of invasion; no more would the instruments of death *be furbished against the day of battle*. *The sword* would *be* literally *beaten into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning hook; nation would no more lift up sword against nation; nor kingdom against kingdom; neither would they learn war any more.* The human wolf, forgetting all his native ferocity, would cease to thirst for the blood of the lamb; and cruelty, slaughter, and desolation, to lay waste the miserable habitations of men. *The walls*, within and without which, violence resounded, and ravaged, *would be called* SALVATION; and *the gates*, before which destruction frowned at the head of an invading host, *would be surnamed* PRAISE.

V. *The same disposition would manifest itself in universal and unceasing piety to God.*

The Infinite Mind is the Infinite Benefactor of the Universe. As the Source and Centre of all existence; as the great Benefactor of all beings; as the Subject of divine blessedness, and excellence; God would be regarded by such a disposition with supreme benevolence and complacency. *Piety* is nothing but this disposition, directed to this great and glorious Being. The *love*, which *is the fulfilling of the second* command of the moral *Law*, is also perfect obedience to the *first*, which *is like unto the second*. Without love, *fear* becomes a base and pernicious passion, totally destitute of amiableness, and excellency; united with love, or in a mind where love reigns, it is changed into the sublime character of *Reverence;* the proper and filial regard to God from his children. *Dependence* without love, is nothing. Without love, *Confidence* cannot exist. *Hope* and *Joy* equally spring from it. *Gratitude* is but one manner, in which it is exercised.

He, who loves his neighbour, on any account, with the benevolence of the Gospel, will, and must, of course, love his Creator. If he exercises evangelical confidence at all; he cannot but exercise it supremely in God. If he be grateful to a human benefactor; he must be beyond measure, more grateful to the divine Benefactor. If he love moral excellence at all; he must, more than in all other excellence, delight in that, which glows with unceasing glory in the Eternal Mind.

In God, therefore, this desirable disposition would find the highest object of all its attachments, the supreme end of all its conduct. To him the devotion of such a spirit would be complete, unceasing, and endless. To please, obey, and glorify him would be the instinctive, and the commanding, aim of the man, in whom it was found; and, in the case supposed, in all men. All men would be changed into children of God. The earth would become one universal temple, from which prayer, and praise, and faith, and love, would ascend before the throne of God and the Lamb, every morning and every evening. Time, hitherto a period of sense and sin, of impiety, and rebellion, would be converted into an universal sabbath of peace and worship. *Holiness to the Lord would be written on all the pursuits and employments of mankind. Zion, the city of our God*, would extend its walls from the rising to the setting sun; and comprehend all the great family of Adam within its circuit; while on its gates would be inscribed in immortal characters, JEHOVAH IS HERE.

Let me now ask, whether the Love of the Gospel, the spirit of doing good, is not in the view of all, who hear me, a disposition more desirable, than the present disposition of Man? Think what the world now is; and what, since the apostacy, it ever has been. Call to mind the private wretchedness, guilt, and debasement, which, within and without you, deform the human character, and destroy human happiness. Call to mind the public sins, which have blackened the world from the beginning; and the public

miseries, which have rung with groans, and shrieks, throughout the whole reign of time, and from one end of heaven to the other. What a vast proportion of these evils has man created for himself, and his fellow-creatures! How small a portion has God created! and how mild and proper a punishment has this been for the authors of the rest! Of this complication of guilt and wo, every man is, in some degree, the subject, and the author. All men are daily employed in complaining of others; and none, almost, in reforming themselves. Were each individual to begin the task of withdrawing from the common mass the evils which he occasions, the work would be easily done. Those, produced by men, would be annihilated, and those, occasioned by God, would cease; because, where there were no transgressions, God would not exercise his *strange work of punishment.*

How mighty would be the change! Benevolence would take place of malignity, friendship of contention, peace of war, truth of falsehood, and happiness of misery. This dreary world would become a Paradise. The brutal, deformed character of man, would give place to the holiness and dignity of angels, and all the perplexed, melancholy, and distressing scene of time would assume the order, beauty, and glory, of the celestial system.

With the nature and effects of the present human character, the selfishness of man, so fondly, proudly, and obstinately cherished by every human breast, you are all, at least in some degree, acquainted. It is scarcely necessary, that I should recall to your minds the universal corruption of the *antediluvian world;* and the violence and pollution, which rendered this earth too impure, and deformed, to be any longer seen by the perfect eye of JEHOVAH. It is scarcely necessary to remind you of the premature apostacy, which followed the deluge; the brutal idolatry, which, like a cloud from the bottomless pit, darkened this great globe to the four ends of heaven; the putrid infection, which tainted *Sodom* and *Gomorrah;* the rank and rotten growth of sin, which poisoned and destroyed the nations of *Canaan;* the deplorable defections of *Israel* and *Judah;* the bloody oppressions of *Assyria*, *Babylon*, and *Persia;* the monstrous ambition, and wild ravages, of *Alexander;* the base treacheries, and deformed cruelties, of *his followers;* the iron-handed plunder, butchery, and devastation of *Rome;* the terrible ravages of *Mohammed* and *his disciples;* or the fearful waste of man by *Alaric*, *Attila*, and their barbarous companions in slaughter. As little necessity is there to detail the wars, and ruins, of modern EUROPE; the massacres of the *Romish Hierarchy*, the tortures of the *Inquisition*, the absolutions and indulgencies issued from the *Vatican*, to pardon sin, and to sanction rebellion against God. Your minds must be familiarized to the lamentable degradation, the amazing miseries, the death-like slavery of the nations, which fill the continent of *Africa.* You cannot be unacquainted with the swinish brutism of the *Chinese;* the more brutal deformi-

ty, the tiger-like thirst for blood, of the *Hindoos* and of *the strangers*, who have successively invaded *Hindostan;* the fell and fiend-like cruelty that has made modern *Persia* a desert; the stupid, but furious superstition, and the tainted impurity of *Turkey*. To these monstrous corruptions, these wonderful sins of nations claiming, generally, the name of civilized, add the crimes of the savage world; and fasten your eyes for a moment on the wolfish rage, which reigns, and riots, in the human animals, prowling, regularly, for blood and havoc around the deserts of *America* and *Asia:* and you will be presented with an imperfect, but for my purpose a sufficient, exemplification of the spirit, which rules the heart of man, and actuates the vast family of *Adam*.

But this spirit is unnecessary to man. The disposition, which I have described, might just as easily inform the mind, and control the conduct. We might as easily be benevolent, as selfish; virtuous as sinful. No new faculties are necessary; and no change is required, but of the disposition. How superior is the disposition, here illustrated, to that, whose effects have been so uniformly dreadful! Hitherto I have used the language of *supposition* only; and have declared, that, if such were the character of our race, such also *would be* the state of this unhappy world. Now I inform you, that such, one day, will be the true character and state of man.

The period will one day arrive: the period is now on the wing: the day will certainly dawn: the morning-star is, perhaps, even now ascending in the east, of that day, in which Christ will return, and reign on the earth. I neither intend, nor believe, that he will appear *in person*, until the great and final day, which the Scriptures emphatically call *his second coming;* for *the heavens must receive him until the times of the restitution of all things*. But he will appear in his Providence, and by his *Spirit*, to *renew the face of the earth*. *A new heart and a right spirit* will *he create within them*. *His law he will write in their hearts; and his fear will he put in their minds; and their sins, and their iniquities, will he remember no more*. This new heart, this right spirit, will be no other than the disposition, which has been here considered; the very obedience of the Law, which will be thus written; the new creation, which is thus promised.

By the implantation of this holy character in the soul, a change will be accomplished, which is exhibited in the Scriptures in terms of hyperbolical and singular sublimity. In their *present state of Apostacy*, mankind are considered in this sacred volume, as being all buried in a death-like sleep. From this benumbing lethargy, hopeless and endless, unless removed by Almighty power, they are represented as roused anew to consciousness, to feeling, and to action, by the awakening voice of God. In the present state, they are declared to be madmen; groping in the gloom, wantoning in the excesses, and venting the rage, of Bedlam In the new one,

they are exhibited as restored to reason, to sobriety, to intellectual dignity and usefulness, and as introduced again to the society, converse, and esteem, of rational beings. Originally, they are prisoners to sin and Satan, the victims of turpitude, and the sport of fiends: yet they are *prisoners of hope.* In their renovation they have heard *liberty proclaimed to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound;* and, at the sound of these glad tidings, they have shaken off their chains, and escaped from their dungeon into *the glorious liberty of the Sons of God.* In their present state; they are pronounced to be dead, and fallen together in one great valley of the shadow of death; the appointed and immense receptacle of departed men; where their bones are dispersed over the waste; dried, whitened, and returning to their original dust. A voice from heaven, resounding through the regions of this immense catacomb, commands the scattered fragments to assemble from the four corners of heaven; to re-unite in their proper places; and to constitute anew the forms of men. A noise, a shaking, a rustling, is heard over the vast GOLGOTHA; a general commotion begins; and, moved by an instinctive power, bone seeks its kindred bone; the sinews and flesh spontaneously arise, and cover the naked form; and the Spirit of life breathes with one divine and universal energy on the unnumbered multitude. Inspired thus with breath, and life, the great host of mankind instinctively rise, and stand on their feet, and live again with immortal life. The great world of death is filled with animated beings; and throughout its amazing regions, those who were *dead* are *alive again,* and those who were *lost* to the creation *are found.*

This resurrection is no other, than a resurrection to spiritual life; no other, than an assumption of this new and heavenly character. This character, this disposition, will constitute the sum, and the glory, of the Millennial state, and the foundation of all its blessings. *When the heavens shall drop down* dew *from above, the skies pour down righteousness, and the earth open, and bring forth salvation;* all the external good, all the splendour and distinction, of that happy period, will follow as things of course; as consequences, which, in the divine system, Virtue draws in its train.

The Lord of hosts will, therefore, *make for all nations, a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees well refined. The Lord of hosts will swallow up death in victory: and will wipe away the tears from all faces; and will take away the reproach of his people from all the earth. He will lay the stones of Zion with fair colours, and her foundations with Sapphires; will make her windows of agates, her gates of carbuncles, and all her borders of pleasant stones. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

SERMON XCIX.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE SECOND GREAT COMMANDMENT.—UTILITY THE FOUNDATION OF VIRTUE.

Acts xx. 35.—*I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring, ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give, than to receive.*

IN my two last discourses, I endeavoured to show by a variety of arguments, that a disposition voluntarily employed in doing good, is productive of more Personal and Public happiness, than any other can be. In those discourses, and in several preceding ones, it has, if I mistake not, been sufficiently proved, that the same disposition in the Creator and his intelligent creatures is the source not only of more happiness to the Creation at large, than any other, but of all the happiness which has existed or will ever exist.

Virtue, or Moral Excellence, is an object of such high import, as to have engaged, in every enlightened country, and period, the deepest attention of mankind. It has, of course, been the subject of the most laborious investigations, and of very numerous discussions. Inquisitive men have asked with no small anxiety, "What is Virtue?" "What is its nature?" "What is its excellence?" And, "What is the foundation, on which this excellence rests?" To these questions, widely different and directly opposite answers have been given. In modern times, and in this as well as other countries, much debate has existed concerning *the Foundation of Virtue.* It has been said to be founded in *the Nature of things; in the Reason of things; in the Fitness of things; in the Will of God;* and *in Utility.* My intention in this discourse is to examine *the nature of this subject.*

The phrase, *the foundation of Virtue,* has been very differently understood by different writers. Indeed, the word, *foundation,* in this case seems to be a defective one; as being ambiguous; and, therefore, exposed to different interpretations. When Virtue is said *to be founded in the Will of God, or in Utility,* some writers appear to intend by this phraseology, that *the Will of God, or Utility,* is the *Rule, Measure,* or *Directory, of virtuous conduct.* Others evidently intend, *that one, or the other, of these things, is what constitutes it virtue; makes it valuable, excellent, lovely, praiseworthy, and rewardable.* It is, therefore, absolutely necessary for me to observe, antecedently to entering on this discussion, that *I use the*

phrase in the sense last mentioned; and intend, by the Foundation of Virtue, that which constitutes its value and excellence. It is necessary, also, to premise further, *that by the word, Utility,* I mean *a Tendency to produce Happiness.*

Having premised these things, I shall endeavour, in the following discourse, to support this Doctrine: THAT VIRTUE IS FOUNDED IN UTILITY.

The Text is a general and indirect declaration of this doctrine. The word, *blessed,* is sometimes used to denote a state, happy in itself; and sometimes a state, made happy, or blessed, by God. *To give,* in the sense of the text, *is voluntarily to communicate happiness;* or, in other words, *to be voluntarily useful.* As we are in fact made happy by God, whenever we are happy; it is evident, that those moral beings, who are most happy, being made so by Him as a reward of their character and conduct, and not merely by the nature of that character and conduct, are most approved by him. That, which is most approved by God, is in itself most excellent. But the text informs us, that voluntary usefulness is most approved by God, because it is peculiarly blessed by him; and is, therefore, the highest excellence. A man may be virtuous in *receiving good* at the hands of his fellow-creatures. But his virtue will consist only in the disposition, with which he receives it: his gratitude; his desire to glorify God; and his wishes to requite, whenever it shall be in his power, his created benefactors. This is being useful in the only way, which the situation, here supposed, allows; and the only thing which is virtuous, or excellent, in the mere state of *receiving good.*

To give, or communicate good, is a nobler, and more excellent state of being, than that of receiving good can be; because the giver is voluntarily the originator of happiness. In this conduct he resembles God himself, the Giver of all good, in that characteristic, which is the peculiar excellence and glory of his nature. Accordingly God loves, and for this reason blesses, him, in a preeminent degree. The proof of his superior excellence is complete in the fact, that he is peculiarly blessed: for these peculiar blessings, which he receives, are indubitable evidence of the peculiar favour of God; and the peculiar favour of God is equal evidence of peculiar excellence in him, who is thus blessed. But the only excellence, here alleged, or supposed, by Christ, is the spirit of doing good; or, in other words, the spirit of voluntary usefulness. In this spirit, then, Virtue or moral excellence consists; and the only excellence, here supposed, is of course founded in Utility.

To the evidence, furnished by the text, both Reason and Revelation add ample confirmation. This, I trust, will sufficiently appear in the course of the following Observations.

1st. *Virtue is not founded in the Will of God.*

Those who hold the doctrine, which I have here denied, may have been led, unwittingly, to adopt it from an apprehension, *that*

they could not ascribe too much to God. This apprehension is, without doubt, generally just; yet it is not just in the absolute sense. There is neither irreverence, nor mistake, in saying, that Omnipotence cannot create that, which will be self-contradictory; make two and two five; nor recall the existence of a past event; because these things would be impossible in their own nature. In the same manner, to ascribe to God that, which is not done by him, though the ascription may flow from reverence to his character, is not yet dictated by reverence. That, which God in fact does, is more honourable to him, than any thing else can be; and no error can in its nature be reverential towards God, or required by him of his creatures.

The Doctrine, *that Virtue is founded in the will of God*, supposes, that *that, which is now virtue, became such, became excellent, valuable, praiseworthy, and rewardable, because God willed it to be so; and, had he not willed it to be so, it would not have been virtue.* Of course, if we were to suppose Intelligent beings created, and left, without any law, to choose their conduct; or, if we were to suppose the universe to exist, just as it now exists, and exist thus either by chance, or necessity; that, which is now virtuous, excellent, and praiseworthy, would at the utmost possess a nature merely indifferent; and, although all other beings remained just as they now are, would cease to be excellent, lovely, and deserving of approbation. According to the same scheme also, that, which is now sinful, or vicious, would cease to be of this nature; and no longer merit hatred, blame, or punishment. In plainer language, veracity and lying, honesty and fraud, justice and oppression, kindness and cruelty, although exactly the same things which they now are, and although producing exactly the same effects, would no more possess their present, opposite moral character; but would equally deserve our love and approbation, or our hatred and disesteem. If virtue and vice are such, only because God willed them to be such; if virtue is excellent, and vice worthless, only because he willed them to be so; then vice in itself is just as excellent as virtue, and virtue just as worthless as vice. Let me ask, Can any man believe this to be true?

Further, the supposition, that virtue is founded in the will of God, implies, that God willed virtue to be excellent without any reason. If virtue and vice had, originally, or as they were seen by the eye of God, no moral difference in their nature; then there was plainly no reason, why God should prefer, or why he actually preferred, one of them to the other. There was, for example, no reason, why he chose, and required, that Intelligent creatures should love *him*, and *each other*, rather than that they should hate him, and hate each other. In choosing, and requiring, that they should exercise this love, God acted, therefore, without any motive whatever. Certainly, no sober man will attribute this conduct to God.

This supposition, also, is inconsistent with the *Omniscience of God.* Every thing which exists, or which will ever exist, was, antecedently to its existence, or in other words, eternally and immutably, present to the divine mind. In the same manner, all other, possible things, that is, things which God could have created if he had pleased, were also present to his view. Every man knows, that a vast multitude of such things are successively present to his own imagination; and that he can think of new worlds, new beings to inhabit them, and new furniture to replenish them. But, unquestionably, God knows all things which are known by his creatures, and infinitely more. When created things were thus present to his eye, antecedently to their existence, they were exactly the same things in his view, which they afterwards were, when they began to exist; had exactly the same natures; sustained exactly the same relations; and were just as good, indifferent, or evil, just as excellent or worthless, as amiable or hateful, as commendable or blameworthy, as rewardable or punishable, as they afterwards were in fact. This may be illustrated by a familiar example. Most persons have read more or less of those fictitious histories, which are called novels; and every person knows, that the several actors, exhibited in them, never had any real existence. Yet every one knows equally well, that the characters, which they severally sustain, are as really good or evil, lovely or hateful, praiseworthy or blameable, as the same characters of the same persons would be, had they all been living men and women. It is, therefore, unanswerably evident, that moral characters, when merely seen in contemplation, are, independently of their actual existence in living beings, and therefore before they have existed in such beings, as well as when they never exist at all in this manner, good or evil to the eye of the mind. Of course, they are good or evil in their own nature. Of course, they were seen to be good or evil by the Omniscience of God. It is, therefore, inconsistent with the doctrine, that God is omniscient, to say, that virtue is founded in the will of God.

Again; The scheme, which I am controverting, not only involves in it, that mankind, with all their impiety, injustice, cruelty, oppression, wars, and butcheries, are in their nature equally amiable, and excellent, as Angels, with all their truth and benevolence; but also, that the character of Fiends is in itself, and independently of the fact, that God chose it should be otherwise, just as lovely, excellent, and praiseworthy, as that of Angels. If, then, God had willed the character, which Satan adopted, and sustains, to be moral excellence, and that, which Gabriel sustains, to be moral worthlessness; these two beings, continuing in every other respect the same, would have interchanged their characters. Satan would have become entirely lovely, and Gabriel entirely detestable. Must not he, who can believe this doctrine, as easily believe, that if God had willed it, two and two would have become five?

Is it at all easier to believe, that truth and falsehood can interchange their natures, than that a square and a circle can interchange theirs?

Finally; if virtue and vice, or sin and holiness, are founded only in the will of God; then, I ask, What is the Nature of that Will? We are accustomed to say, the Scriptures are accustomed to say, that God is holy, righteous, good, and *glorious in holiness*: expressions which, together with many others of the same nature, indicate that God himself, and therefore, that the will of God, is excellent, and supremely deserving of his own infinite love, and of the highest love of all intelligent creatures. Does this excellence of God depend on the fact, that he willed his moral character, and therefore his Will, to be excellent? Or is the character of God, and of consequence his will, excellent in its own nature? If the divine character be not excellent in its own nature, and independently of any act of the divine Will, determining that it should be so; then, if God had been a being infinitely malevolent, and by an act of his will had determined, that his character should be infinitely excellent, it would of course have become infinitely excellent; and he himself would have deserved to be loved, praised, and glorified, for his infinite malice, cruelty, and oppression, just as he now does for his infinite goodness, truth, faithfulness, and mercy. According to this scheme, therefore, there is no original moral difference between the characters of an infinitely malevolent being, and an infinitely benevolent one; because this difference depends on a mere arbitrary act of will, and not at all on the respective natures of the things themselves. That a malevolent being would have made this determination, there is no more reason to doubt, than that it would be made by a benevolent being: for it cannot be doubted, that a malevolent being would have entirely loved and honoured himself. The question, whether God is a benevolent, or malevolent, Being, seems, therefore, to be nugatory: for all our inquiries concerning the subject, which have any practical importance, terminate in this single question: What has God chosen?

We have of course no interest in asking what is his moral nature.

The Scriptures certainly exhibit this subject in a very different light. They every where consider moral things, that is, both moral beings, and their actions, as differing altogether in their several natures, and independently of any act of the divine will, determining that they should thus differ. Particularly, they exhibit God himself not only as being holy, righteous, just, true, faithful, kind, and merciful, but as excellent on account of these things; infinitely excellent; infinitely glorious; infinitely deserving of the love, that is, the Complacency, (the kind of love every where intended in this discourse) of his Intelligent creatures. Accordingly, God is often spoken of as excellent; and as *excellency, in the abstract.* Thus, he is styled *the Excellency of Jacob.* *His name is* said to *be*

excellent in all the earth. How excellent, saith the Psalmist, *is thy loving kindness. The Lord of hosts*, says *Isaiah*, *is excellent in working*. In all these passages it is plainly declared, that God is excellent in his own nature. In the same manner, the Scriptures assert, *that his law is perfect*, and *his commandment pure;* that *his statutes are right*, and *his judgments altogether righteous;* and that *his commandment is holy, just, and good:* that is, that these things possess the several kinds of excellence, attributed to them, in their own nature. For if the Scriptures intended only, that they were good, because God willed them to be so, when they were before neither good nor evil; it would have been mere tautology to have used this language. It would have been no more, than saying, that *the law, the commandments*, and *the statutes*, of God were *his* law, commandments, and statutes: this fact being, according to the scheme here opposed, all *that*, in which their excellence lies. In the same manner, when it is said, *Thou art good, and doest good;* it ought to be said, *Thou art, what thou art; and doest what thou doest*, for this is all that is meant, according to the scheme in question.

In the same manner, the Scriptures declare, that *the righteous Lord loveth righteousness;* and thus teach us, that there is in righteousness a cause, a reason, or, in other words, a nature, for which it is, and deserves to be, loved. They also assure us, that *he hates wickedness, and that it is an abomination to him.* There is, therefore, a reason, why he hates it. As he always hated the latter, and loved the former; and, therefore, before the one was forbidden, and the other required, of his Intelligent creatures; it is certain, that the one was hateful, and the other lovely, in its own nature.

In Jer. ix. 24, it is said, *Let him that glorieth glory in this; that he understandeth, and knoweth me; that I am the* LORD, *which exercise loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the* LORD. In this passage God requires mankind to glory not merely because he acts, but because he acts in such a manner; because he *exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth;* and informs us, that he himself *delights in these things:* in other words, because they are lovely in his sight.

In Hebrews vi. 18, it is said, that *it is impossible for God to lie.* If at any given time it is impossible for God to lie; it has been always impossible. For what reason? If truth and falsehood are in their own nature indifferent; then, certainly, it was once just as easy for God to lie, as to speak truth. The only reason, why it is now impossible for him to utter falsehood, is, that he is utterly indisposed to this conduct. But if falsehood and truth have the same moral nature in themselves; there can be no reason, why he was originally disposed to speak truth, rather than falsehood. Yet he is infinitely disposed to speak truth, and infinitely indisposed to

utter falsehood. Falsehood is therefore totally odious in itself, and truth altogether desirable.

Every thing contained in the Scriptures, relative to this subject, is of the same tenour, so far as I have been able to understand them, with the passages which I have quoted. Nor have I found in them a single hint, that virtue and vice have not in themselves a totally different moral nature; or that they depend for their excellence, and worthlessness, on an act of the divine will. On the contrary, the whole drift of the Scriptures is to exhibit them, as possessed of these characteristics in themselves; and as, for this reason, chosen and required on the one hand, and rejected and forbidden on the other.

There are persons, who speak of the Will of God as constituting the nature of things, when they only mean, that it gives them existence. These persons appear not to discern, that the nature of the thing is exactly the same, whether it exist, or is only seen in contemplation. The *Achilles* of *Homer*, the *Æneas* of *Virgil*, the *Lear* of *Shakspeare*, and the *Grandison* of *Richardson*, have all the same character, which real men, answering severally to the descriptions of them, would possess. The will of God gives birth to the existence of all things. But the things themselves, as seen by the divine Mind, have exactly the same nature, and sustain the same relations to each other; have the same value or worthlessness, the same excellence or turpitude; which they have, when they really exist. This nature is what makes them desirable, or undesirable, to the eye of God; and induces him either to choose, or reject them. While it is true, therefore, that the will of God gives birth to all things, and to their several natures, as really existing in fact; it is equally true, that, as seen by the divine Mind, the same things had exactly the same nature before they existed. A house, before it is built, and when formed merely in a plan, has exactly the same figure and proportions, as seen by the mind of the builder, which it has, after it is built according to this plan. Truth and falsehood, right and wrong, in creatures, were exactly the same things to the eye of Omniscience, before, and after, they existed.

From these considerations it is, I apprehend, evident, that *the Foundation of virtue is not in the Will of God, but in the Nature of things.* The next object of inquiry, therefore, is, *Where in the nature of things shall we find this foundation?* I begin my answer to this question by observing,

2dly. *That there is no Ultimate Good but Happiness.*

By *Ultimate Good*, I intend *that, which is originally denominated good.* Good is of two kinds only: Happiness, and the Causes, or Means, of happiness. Happiness is the ultimate good: the causes, or means, of happiness, are good, only because they produce it. Thus fruit is good, because it is pleasant to the taste. The tree, on which it grows, is good, because it produces it.

Health is good in itself: a medicine is good, because it preserves, or restores, it.

We are accustomed to hear so much said, and truly said, concerning the excellence, beauty, and glory, of Virtue, that we are ready to conceive, and speak, of it, as being Original, or Ultimate good, independently of the happiness, which it brings with it. Nay, we are ready to feel dissatisfied with ourselves and others, for calling this position in question; to consider this conduct as involving a kind of irreverence towards this glorious object; as diminishing its importance, and obscuring its lustre. This, however, arises from mere misapprehension. If virtue brought with it no enjoyment to us, and produced no happiness to others; it would be wholly destitute of all the importance, beauty, and glory, with which it is now invested. Let any good man ask himself what that is, for which he values his own virtue; what constitutes the commendations of it in the conversation and writings, particularly the sermons, with which he is acquainted; and what is the amount of all that, for which it is commended in the Scriptures; and he will find every idea, which he forms of it distinctly and definitely, completely summed up in these two things: that *it is the means of glory to God, and of good to his creatures.* I have shown in a former discourse, that to glorify God, that is, voluntarily, (the thing which is here intended) is exactly the same conduct towards him, which, when directed towards creatures, produces their happiness. It is, in truth, doing all that, which it is in our power to do, towards the happiness of the Creator. The happiness of God consists in the enjoyment, furnished partly by his sufficiency for all great and glorious purposes, and partly by the actual accomplishment of these purposes. I separate these things, only for the sake of exhibiting them more distinctly to view; and am well aware, that as they exist in the divine Mind, they are absolutely inseparable. *The Lord*, saith the Psalmist, *shall rejoice in his works.* Had these works never existed; God would not thus rejoice. *God* is also said *to delight in the upright;* and *to delight in his Church.* Were there no upright persons; were there no Church; this delight would cease. It is therefore true in the proper sense, that virtuous persons, by voluntarily glorifying God, become the objects of his delight; or, in other words, the means of happiness, or enjoyment, to him. It will not be supposed, that God is, for this reason, dependent on his creatures for his happiness, or for any part of it. These very creatures are absolutely dependent on Him; and are made by himself the objects of his delight: and such they become by the same voluntary conduct, which in other cases produces happiness in creatures. When we consider virtue, as it respects creatures only, the character, which I have given to it, is more easily seen, and more readily comprehended. It may easily be seen, in this case, that all its value consists in the enjoyment, which either attends, or follows it. All the *exercises* of virtue are

delightful in themselves. It is delightful to do good to others; to see them happy, and made happy by our means; to enjoy peace of conscience, and self-approbation. These and the like enjoyments, may be said *to attend virtue;* and, it is well known, enter largely into every account, which is given of its excellence. *The Consequences* of virtue are no other, than the good, which it produces in originating, and increasing, social happiness: and these, together with the articles involved in the two preceding considerations, make up the whole amount of all the commendations of this divine object, given either by the Scriptures, or by mankind. The excellence of virtue, therefore, consists wholly in this: that it is *the cause of good*, that is, *of happiness;* the Ultimate good; the only thing, for which virtue is valuable.

Virtue in God, or Benevolence, is on all hands considered as the glory, and excellency, of the divine character. What is Benevolence? The love of doing good; or a disposition to produce happiness. In what does its excellence consist? In this: that it is the voluntary cause of happiness. Take away this single attribute of Virtue; and it will be easily seen, that its excellence is all taken away also.

These observations prove, if I mistake not, that happiness is the only Ultimate good; and that virtue is termed good, only as being the cause of happiness.

3dly. *Virtue is the only original cause of happiness.*

It is hardly necessary to say, that *Involuntary beings* can, of themselves, produce nothing; as being absolutely inactive; and that there are no *Active beings*, beside those which are *Voluntary*. But voluntary beings produce happiness, only when they are disposed to produce it: and the only disposition, which prompts to the production of it, is Virtue. This is so obvious, after what has been said, as to need no further illustration.

Contrivance and Activity are the original sources of all the effects, or changes, which take place in the Universe; particularly of all the happiness, which it contains. Contrivance and Activity in the Creator gave birth to all existence, except his own. Contrivance and Activity in Intelligent creatures, under God, give birth to all the happiness, of which they are the sources to themselves and each other.

Minds are active, only by means of the power of Willing. The two great dispositions of minds, by which all their volitions are characterised, and directed, are Benevolence and Selfishness. Benevolence is Virtue; Selfishness is Sin. Benevolence aims to promote happiness in all beings capable of happiness: Selfishness, at the promotion of the private, separate happiness *of one;* subordinating to it that *of all others*, and opposing that of others, whenever it is considered as inconsistent with that of one's self. *Benevolence, therefore, directs the whole active power, or energy, of the mind, in which it exists, to the production of the most extensive*

happiness. This is what I intend by *the Utility of Virtue;* and that, in which, as it appears to my own view, all its excellence is found. Sin is naturally, and necessarily, the parent of misery; since it arms every individual against the interest of every other.

Were sin in its own proper tendency to produce, invariably, the same good, which it is the tendency of virtue to produce; were it the means, invariably, of the same glory to God, and of the same enjoyment to the Universe; no reason is apparent to me, why it would not become excellent, commendable, and rewardable, in the same manner, as Virtue now is. Were Virtue regularly to effectuate the same dishonour to God, and the same misery to Intelligent Creatures, now effectuated by sin; I see no reason, why we should not attribute to it all the odiousness, blameworthiness, and desert of punishment, which we now attribute to Sin. All this is, I confess, impossible; and is rendered so by the nature of these things. Still the supposition may be allowably made for the purposes of discussion.

The great objection to this doctrine arises from a misapprehension of the subject. It is this: that *if Virtue is founded in Utility, then Utility becomes the Measure of virtue, and, of course, the Rule of all our moral conduct.* This is the error of *Godwin;* and, in an indefinite degree, of *Paley*, and several other writers. Were we omniscient, and able to discern the true nature of all the effects of our conduct; this consequence must undoubtedly be admitted. To the eye of God it is the real rule. It will not, I trust, be denied, that he has chosen, and required, that to be done by his Intelligent creatures, which is most useful; or, in other words, most productive of good to the universe, and of glory to himself; rather than that which is less so. But, to us, Utility, as judged of by ourselves, cannot be a proper rule of moral conduct. *The real usefulness of our conduct, or its usefulness upon the whole, lies in the nature of all its effects, considered as one aggregate.* But nothing is more evident, than that few, very few indeed, of these, can ever be known to us by our own foresight. If the information, given us by the Scriptures concerning this subject, were to be lost; we should be surprised to see how small was the number of cases, in which this knowledge was attainable, even in a moderate degree; and how much uncertainty attended even these. As, therefore, we are unable to discern with truth, or probability, the real usefulness of our conduct; it is impossible, that our moral actions should be safely guided by this rule.

The Bible is, with the plainest evidence, the only safe rule, by which moral beings can, in this world, direct their conduct. The precepts of this Sacred Volume were all formed by Him, who alone *sees the end from the beginning*, and who alone, therefore, understands the real nature of all moral actions. No other being is able to determine how far any action is, upon the whole, useful, or noxious; or to make Utility the measure of Virtue. As well

might a man determine, that a path, whose direction he can discern only for a furlong, will conduct him in a straight course to a city, distant from him a thousand miles, as to determine, that an action, whose immediate tendency he perceives to be useful, will therefore be useful, through a thousand years, or even through ten. How much less able must he be to perceive what will be its real tendency in the remote ages of endless duration. It is impossible therefore, that utility, as decided by our judgment, should become the rule of moral action.

It has also been objected to this doctrine, that if Virtue is founded in Utility, *every thing, which is useful, must so far be virtuous.* This objection it is hardly necessary to answer. Voluntary usefulness is the only virtue. A smatterer in moral philosophy knows, that understanding and will, are necessary to the existence of virtue. He who informs us, that, if virtue is founded in utility, animals, vegetables, and minerals, the sun, and the moon, and the stars, must be virtuous, so far as they are useful, is either disposed to trifle with mankind for his amusement, or supposes them to be triflers.

REMARKS.

1st. *From these observations we learn, in an interesting manner, the desirableness of virtue.*

The whole tendency of virtue is to promote happiness; and this is its only ultimate tendency. It prefers, of course, the greater happiness to the less, and the greatest, always, to that which can exist in a subordinate degree. It diffuses happiness every where, and to every being capable of receiving it, so far as this diffusion is in its power. In this respect it knows no distinction of family, country, or world; and operates to the benefit of those, who are near, more than to that of those, who are distant, only because its operations will be more effectual, and because, when all pursue this course, the greatest good will be done to all. Its efficacy also is complete. The object at which it aims, it can accomplish. It can contrive, it can direct, it can effectuate. To do good is its *happiness*, as well as its *tendency*. It will, therefore, never be inattentive, never discouraged, never disposed to relax its efforts. Thus it is a perennial spring, whose waters never fail; a spring, at which thousands and millions may slake their thirst for enjoyment, and of which the streams are always pure, healthful, and refreshing.

2dly. *We learn from the same observations the odious nature of Sin.*

Sin, or Selfishness, aiming supremely at the private, separate good of an individual, and subordinating to it the good of all others, confines its efforts, of course, to the narrow sphere of one's self. All the individuals also, in whom this spirit prevails, have, each, a personal good, to which each subordinates every other

good. There are, therefore, as many separate interests in a collection of selfish beings, as there are individuals; and to each of these interests the individual, whose it is, intends to make those of all others subservient. Of consequence, these interests cannot fail to clash; and the individuals to oppose, and contend with, each other. Hence an unceasing course of hatred, wrath, revenge, and violence, must prevail among beings of this character; of private quarrels, and public wars. All, who oppose this darling interest, are regarded by the individual as his enemies: and thus all naturally become the enemies of all. Where this disposition is in a great measure unrestrained, it makes an individual a tyrant, and a society, a collection of banditti. Where it is wholly unrestrained, it converts Intelligent beings into fiends, and their habitation into hell.

The ruling principle, here, is *to gain good from others*, and *not to communicate it to them*. This darling spirit, so cherished by mankind, so active in the present world, so indulged, flattered, and boasted of, by those who possess it, is, instead of being wise and profitable, plainly foolish, shameful, ruinous, and deserving of the most intense reprobation. Notwitstanding all the restraints, laid upon it by the good providence of God; notwithstanding the shortness of life, which prevents us from forming permanent plans, making great acquisitions to ourselves, and producing great mischiefs to others; notwithstanding the weakness, frailty, and fear, which continually attend us; notwitstanding the efficacy of natural affection, the power of conscience and the benevolent influence of Religion on the affairs of mankind; it makes the present world an uncomfortable and melancholy residence; and creates three fourths of the misery, suffered by the race of *Adam*.

All these evils exist, because men are disinclined to do good, or to be voluntarily useful. Were they only disposed to promote each other's happiness, or, in other words, to be useful to each other; the world would become a pleasant and desirable habitation. The calamities, immediately brought upon us by Providence, would be found to be few; those, induced by men upon themselves and each other, would vanish; and in their place beneficence would spread its innumerable blessings.

3dly. *These observations strongly exhibit to us the miserable state of the world of Perdition.*

In this melancholy region no good is done, nor intended to be done. No good is therefore enjoyed. Still, the mind retains its original activity; and *is wise* and vigorous *to do evil*, although it *has* neither *knowledge*, nor inclination, *to do good*. Here, all the passions of a selfish spirit are let loose; and riot, and reign, and ravage. Here, therefore, all are enemies. Here, the wretched individual, surveying the vast regions around him, and casting his eyes forward into the immeasurable progress of eternity, sees himself absolutely alone in the midst of millions, in solitude complete and

endless. Here, voluntary usefulness is for ever unknown, and unheard of; while selfishness in all its dreadful forms assumes an undisputed, an unresisted, dominion, a terrible despotism; and fills the world around her with rage and wretchedness, with terror and doubt, with desolation and despair.

4thly. *How delightful a view do these observations give of Heaven!* Heaven is the world of voluntary usefulness. The only disposition of angels, and *the spirits of just men made perfect*, is to do good; their only employment, to produce happiness. In this employment all the energy of sanctified and perfect minds is exerted without weariness, and without end. How vast, then, how incomprehensible, how endlessly increasing, must be the mass of happiness, brought by their united efforts into being! How ample a provision must it be for all the continually expanding wishes, the continually enlarging capacities, of its glorious inhabitants! How wonderfully, also, must the sum of enjoyment be enhanced to each, when we remember, that he will experience the same delight in the good enjoyed by others, as in that which is immediately his own! Who would not labour to gain an entrance into such a world as this? Who would not bend all his efforts, exhaust all his powers, encounter any earthly suffering, and resolutely overcome every earthly obstacle, to acquire that divine and delightful character of voluntary usefulness, which makes heaven such a world; which makes it the place of God's peculiar presence, the means of his highest glory, and the mansion of everlasting life, peace, and joy, to his children?

SERMON C.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS xx. 3.—*Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.*

IN the series of discourses, which I have lately delivered concerning the great commands of the Moral Law, it has, if I mistake not, been sufficiently shown, that the disposition, required by the Creator of His intelligent creatures in this law, is *Disinterested Love, or the Spirit of doing good.* The *kind* of this disposition is always to do what is right. It will not, however, follow, that the mind in which it exists, will be able always to discern the course of conduct, which is right, upon the whole, to pursue. The disposition may, with absolute correctness, dictate what is absolutely proper to be done in a case, already before the view of the mind; and yet the mind be wholly ignorant, whether that case, or the conduct in question, is such, as would, upon the whole, be best for it to pursue; or whether superior wisdom would not be able to devise for it other, and much more desirable, courses of action. A child may be perfectly holy; and yet possess too little understanding to know in what way he may best act; in what way he may most promote the glory of God, the good of his fellow-creatures, or the good of himself. His disposition may prompt to that, which is exactly right in all the conduct, which is within the reach of his understanding. Yet, if he had more comprehensive views, he might discern far more desirable modes of action, in which he might be much more useful, than in any which he is at present able to devise. He may be able to apply the two great commands of the Moral Law, which have been so extensively considered, with exact propriety to all such cases, as are actually within his view; and yet be utterly unable to devise for himself those kinds of conduct, in which his obedience to these commands might be most profitably employed.

What is true of a child, is true, in different degrees, of all Intelligent creatures. God only, as was shown in a former discourse, is able to discern, and to prescribe, the conduct, which, upon the whole, it is proper for such creatures to pursue. He *sees from the beginning to the end;* and perfectly understands the nature, and the consequences, of all Intelligent action. This knowledge, which he alone possesses, and which is indispensable to this purpose, enables him to accomplish it in a manner absolutely perfect.

What is true, in this respect, of Intelligent creatures universally, is peculiarly true of *Sinful creatures*. The *disposition* of sinners leads them, of course, to that conduct, which is wrong and mischievous. They are, therefore, always in danger of erring from *mere disposition*. Besides, sin renders the mind *voluntarily ignorant;* and in this manner, also, exposes it continually to error. A great part of all the false opinions, entertained by mankind concerning their duty, are to be attributed solely to the biasses of a sinful disposition. None are so blind, none so erroneous, as those who are unwilling to see.

From a merciful regard to these circumstances, particularly, of mankind, God has been pleased to reveal to them his pleasure, and their duty; to disclose to them all those modes of moral action, all those kinds of moral conduct, in which they may most promote his glory, and their own good. The importance of this Revelation is evidenced, in the strongest manner, by the moral situation of that part of the human race, to whom it has never been published. I need not inform you, that they have been wholly ignorant of the true God, and of a great part of the principles and precepts, of the moral system; that they have worshipped men, animals, evil spirits, and gods of gold and silver, of wood and stone. I need not inform you, that they have violated every moral precept, and every dictate of natural affection. I need not inform you, that without Revelation we should have been heathen also; and should, in all probability, have been this day prostrating ourselves before an ox or an ape, or passing children through the fire unto *Moloch*.

Among the several parts of the Revelation, which has raised our moral condition so greatly above that of the heathen, *the Decalogue*, is eminently distinguished. The decalogue is a larger summary of our duty, than that which is contained in the two great commands, already considered. The same things, in substance, are required in it; but they are branched out into various important particulars; all of them supremely necessary to be known by *us*. To enforce their importance on our minds, God was pleased to utter the several precepts, contained in this summary, with his own voice; and to write them with his own finger on two tables of stone, fashioned by himself. They were published, also, amid the thunderings and lightnings of Mount Sinai, from the bosom of the cloud, by which it was enveloped, and out of the flame, which ascended from its summit.

The four first of the commands, contained in the decalogue, regulate our immediate duty to God; the six last, our duty to men. The former were written on *one*, properly called the *first*, table; the latter on *another*, usually styled the *second*, table.

Two of these commands, one of the first and one of the second table, are *positive*, that is, *direct injunctions of our duty:* the remaining eight are *negative*, or *prohibitory*. Both classes, however,

are of exactly the same extent: those, which are positive, forbidding the conduct, which is contrary to what they enjoin; and those, which are negative, requiring that, which is contrary to what they forbid.

The first of these commands is *the text.* The duty, enjoined in it, is of such a nature, that, to a mind governed by the dictates of reason, an express injunction of it would seem in a great measure unnecessary, if not altogether superfluous. So vast is the difference between the real God, and every possible substitute, that sober contemplation would scarcely suspect it to be possible for a man, who is not bereft of Reason, to put any other being into his place, even under the influence of the most wandering fancy. How unlike all other beings must He evidently be, who made the heavens and the earth; whose breath kindled the sun and the stars; and whose hand rolls the planets through immensity! How infinitely superior does he obviously appear to every thing, which he has made; and how infinitely remote from any rival, or any second! Still, experience has amply testified, that mankind have, almost without ceasing, substituted other Gods for JEHOVAH. Nay, it has clearly evinced, not only that we need to be taught the duty, required by him in the text, but that no precepts, no instructions, and no motives, have been sufficient to keep the world in obedience to this first and greatest law of moral conduct. Nothing, indeed, has so strongly evinced the madness of the human heart, as the conduct, which it has exhibited towards the Creator; and the idolatry, which it has rendered to a vast multitude of the works of his hands.

The word, *gods*, in this passage, may be regarded as denoting not only *the various objects of religious worship*, but also *all the objects of supreme regard, affection*, or *esteem.* The command, it will be observed, is expressed in the absolute, or universal, manner, and may be fairly considered as including every thing, to which mankind render, or can be supposed to render, such regard. The phrase, *before me*, is equivalent to the expressions, *in my sight, in my presence;* and teach us that no such gods are to be admitted within the omnipresence, or within the view of the omniscience, of Jehovah. With these explanations, it will be easily seen, that the text indispensably requires us *to acknowledge the real God as our God; and forbids us to regard any other being in this character.*

To acknowledge Jehovah as our God is to love him supremely, to fear before him with all the heart, and to serve him throughout all our days; in absolute preference to every other being. In this manner we testify, that we esteem him infinitely more excellent, venerable, and deserving of our obedience, than all other beings. After the observations, which I have heretofore made concerning these subjects, it will be unnecessary to expatiate on them at the present time. I shall only observe, therefore, that this is the

highest, the noblest, and the best, service, which we can render to any being, and the only way in which we can acknowledge any being as God. When we render this service to Jehovah, we acknowledge him in his true character. He is infinitely the greatest, and the best, of all beings; and we are under infinitely greater obligations to him, than to any other. Of course, his claims to this service from us, and from all other intelligent creatures, are supreme, and exclusive. When it is rendered by them, God is acknowledged to be what he is; thus divinely great and excellent. At the same time, and in the same manner, we declare, that by his character, and by his blessings, he has laid us under the highest obligations to such conduct.

As this is the only true, natural, and proper, acknowledgment of God; so, when we render the same service to any creature, we acknowledge that creature as our God. In this conduct we are guilty of two gross and abominable sins. In the first place, we elevate the being, who is thus regarded, to the character, and station, of a God: and, in the second place, we remove the true God, in our heart, from his own character of infinite glory, and excellence, and from that exalted station, which he holds as the infinite Ruler, and Benefactor, of the Universe. This sin is a complication of wickedness, wonderfully various and dreadful. In truth, it is a comprehensive summary of iniquity, and the basis of all the crimes which are committed by Intelligent creatures. The evil, involved in it, may, in some measure, be learned from the following observations.

1st. *We are in this conduct guilty of the grossest Falsehood.*

We practically deny, that Jehovah is possessed of those attributes, which alone demand such service from Intelligent creatures; and, on the other hand, assert in the same manner, that the being, to whom we render this service, is invested with these attributes. No falsehoods can be so gross, or so abominable, as these. Nor can they be uttered in any manner, so forcible, so provoking, or so guilty. Our practice is the real interpreter of our thoughts. The tongue may utter any thing at pleasure; but the heart is always disclosed by the language of the life.

2dly. *In this conduct, also, we are guilty of the greatest Injustice.*

This evil is likewise two-fold. First; we violate the rightful claim of Jehovah to the service of Intelligent creatures: and secondly; we render to a creature the service which is due to Him alone. The right, which God has to this service, is supreme, and unalienable. He is our Maker, and Preserver. We are in the most absolute sense his property; and are bound, therefore, by the highest obligation, to be voluntarily his; cheerfully to resign ourselves to his pleasure, and to be employed in doing his will. The obligations, arising from this source, are not a little enhanced by the fact, that the service, which he actually requires of us, is in

the highest degree profitable to ourselves: our highest excellence our greatest honour, and our supreme happiness. At the same time, these obligations are wonderfully increased by the consideration, that God is infinitely excellent and amiable, and therefore claims this testimony of the heart as the just and perfect acknowledgment of his perfect character. Were he *not* our Creator, nor our Preserver, we could not still refuse to render him this regard, without the greatest injury to so glorious a Being.

The created object, to which we actually yield this service, is destitute of all claims to it. In rendering it to him, therefore, we add insult to injustice; and, not contented with denying, and violating the rights of the Creator, we prefer to him, in this manner, a being who *is less than nothing, and vanity.*

3dly. *We are also guilty of the vilest Ingratitude.*

From the wisdom, power, and goodness, of God, we derive our being, our blessings, and our hopes. He created us, he preserves us; and he daily *loads us with his loving-kindness.* He gave his Son to die for us; and sent his Spirit to sanctify us. It is impossible, that we should be in any circumstances, which demand equal gratitude towards any, or towards all, created beings. The service, which he actually requires as the requital of all this beneficence, is no other than in our thoughts, affections, and conduct, to acknowledge him to be what he is; to reverence him, as being infinitely great; to love him, as infinitely excellent; and to serve him as the infinitely righteous and reasonable Ruler of all things. What ingratitude can be compared with that of a creature, who refuses this service? Yet even this ingratitude is mightily enhanced by the wanton wickedness of transferring the regard, which is due to him only, to one of his creatures: a creature like ourselves; perhaps inferior to ourselves: a being, in this view, of no worth; to whom we are under no obligations; and who has not the smallest claim to any such homage. What crime can be more provoking, or more guilty, than the preference of such a creature to such a God?

It was observed above, that the sin, forbidden in the text, is wickedness, wonderfully complicated. Nothing would be more easy, than to show, that pride, rebellion, hatred of excellence, blasphemy, and many other sins, are included in this conduct. It would, however, be unnecessary for the present design, and the time, which such an examination would demand, will, if I mistake not, be more profitably employed in attending to the following

REMARKS.

1st. *From these observations we learn, that Idolatry is a sin of the first magnitude.*

That a sin, which combines in itself Falsehood, Injustice, and Ingratitude, pride, rebellion, and blasphemy, all existing in the grossest and most impudent degree, is of the first magnitude, can-

not be questioned, with reason, or decency. Equally evident is it, that a sin, which is at the bottom of all other wickedness, must be peculiarly enormous. That such is the nature of Idolatry is unanswerably proved by the fact, that, wherever God is acknowledged in the manner above described, the moral character is of course, spotless and unblameable. The commencement of turpitude in an Intelligent creature is his alienation from God, and his preference of some other object to Jehovah. In proportion to the prevalence of this spirit, wickedness of every kind prevails; and in proportion to the degree, in which the soul overcomes, and renounces, this preference, it becomes possessed of moral excellence in all its forms. This truth is strongly seen in the character, and conduct, of all those virtuous men, whose history is recorded in the Scriptures. In a manner scarcely less forcible, or certain, it is also seen in the experience of mankind. All virtue flourishes, wherever God is acknowledged according to the import of the text: and wherever he is not thus acknowledged, all virtue decays, and dies. The great, open, public acknowledgment of God is exhibited in the solemnities of the Sabbath, and the Sanctuary. Wherever these exist uniformly, and prosperously, goodness of character, and of life, will be regularly found to prevail. Wherever they decline, or vanish, virtue invariably vanishes with them.

Nor is this truth less evident from the personal experience of every Christian. Whenever he magnifies in his heart his Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; all his affections are purified, evangelical, and heavenly. His *conversation* is *such as becometh godliness;* and his life *adorns the doctrine of God his Saviour;* is a happy resemblance of the celestial character, and a delightful preparation for celestial enjoyment. But when he ceases, for a time, to yield this glory to his Maker; when the importance of the divine character is lessened, or obscured, in his eyes; when God becomes to the view of his mind less venerable, less excellent, and less lovely; his apprehensions of spiritual objects are clouded and dim; his virtuous affections are cold, inactive, and lifeless. His purposes are bounded by the present world, and centered in himself; and his life is devested of its former beauty, worth and enjoyment. God is the Sun of the Soul. Wherever he shines; there is more moral day, warmth, life, and energy. There, every thing excellent springs up beneath his quickening beams; grows unceasingly with vigour and beauty; and ripens into usefulness and enjoyment. In the absence of this divine luminary, the soul is darkened by night, and chilled by a moral winter. Its views become dim, its affections frozen and torpid, and its progress through life a scene of desolation.

2dly. *The same observations teach us, that all mankind are guilty of Idolatry.*

Covetousness is styled *idolatry* by *St. Paul;* and *stubbornness*

by the Prophet *Samuel*. To many other sins this title is obviously, and to all sin really, applicable. Sin, universally, is no other than selfishness; or a preference of one's self to all other beings, and one's private interests and gratifications to the well-being of the universe; of God and the Intelligent creation. Of this selfishness all men are more or less the subjects. In the exercise of it, they love and serve themselves, *rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.* No beings, except those who inhabit the world of perdition, are probably more undeserving of this high regard. We are not only little and insignificant, born of the dust and kindred to animals; but we are, and are in this very conduct, odious *and abominable, drinking iniquity like water.* To ourselves we render that supreme regard, which is due to God only. Thus we literally idolize ourselves: and, as every man living is guilty of this conduct, every man living is essentially an Idolater.

This spirit manifests itself, however, in an almost endless variety of forms. The parent often idolizes his child; the beauty, her face, her form; the man of genius, his talents; the ambitious man, his fame, power, or station; the miser, his gold; the accomplished man, his manners; the ostentatious man, his villa; and the sensualist, his pleasures. By all these, however, a single spirit is cherished, and discovered. The parent doats upon his child, because it is *his* child. Had it been born of other parents; it might, indeed, be occasionally agreeable to him, but would never have become an object of this peculiar fondness.

This is unanswerably evinced by experience: particularly by the fact, that much more promising and engaging children are never thus doated upon, when they are the children of his fellow-men. What is true of this instance is generally true of the others. Our homage is rendered to *our own* talents, possessions and enjoyments; not to those of our fellow-men. One spirit, therefore, pervades, and reigns throughout, all this varied Idolatry.

3dly. *With these observations in view, we shall cease to wonder, that mankind have been so extensively guilty of continual and enormous sins against each other.*

Sin is one undivided disposition. If it exists in any Intelligent being, it exists, and operates, towards any, and every, other being, with whom he is concerned. It cannot exist towards God, and not towards man; or towards man, and not towards God. It is a wrong bias of the soul; and, of course, operates only to wrong; whatever being the operation may respects.

That those, who are guilty of such falsehood towards God, should be guilty of gross falsehood towards each other, to whom they are under far less obligations of every kind, is certainly to be expected. That those, who with such gross injustice violate all rights, the highest, the most absolute, should without remorse violate rights of so inferior a nature, is no less to be expected. Equally is it a thing of course, that beings, guilty of such enormous

in gratitude, should be ungrateful to each other, whatever this connexion will cause a separation. *He that is unjust, will be unjust still; and he that is filthy, will be filthy still.*

In this manner are explained the [illegible] which fill the heathen world. These evils commenced in [illegible] religion. They [illegible] and *left other Gods to their trust;* Gods of [illegible] and pollutions. A rational mind, sufficiently informed of their defection from the true God, is lost in amazement, while contemplating the objects which they actually worshipped. No being, real or imaginary, was [illegible] from [illegible] or prevented from the [illegible], by any degree of stupidity, folly, or wickedness. They worshipped blocks: they worshipped devils: they worshipped men; usually the worst of men: they worshipped devils.

Their religion, in all its solemn services, was exactly suited to the character of these Gods. Beyond measure was it stupid, silly, impious and horrid. It was replete with cruelty and unnatural vices. Even the [illegible] wickedness, and these innumerable [illegible] were [illegible] various kinds of penance, enjoined as a religious practice for their sins; and in the sacrifice of human victims, adopted as expiations for the guilt of their surviving countrymen. Among these, youths of the noblest birth, the brightest talents, and the most promising character, were, in several nations, butchered, by hundreds, to satisfy the vengeance of their Gods. In *Hindostan*, beside other human victims, twenty thousand women are declared, with unquestionable evidence, to be even now offered up, annually, as victims to religion, on the funeral piles of their deceased husbands. Equally replenished was this religion with wonderful *falsehood*. All the oracles, divinations, visions, dreams, and prophecies, of heathenism, were a mere collection of lies. The same spirit of falsehood pervaded their mythology, their mysteries, their doctrines, their worship, and the means of preserving it. As their Religion had no foundation in Reason, or Revelation; they were, in a sense, compelled, if it was to be preserved at all, to resort to fraud and delusion, for the means both of supporting the worship itself, and the authority of those who prescribed it, among the infatuated worshippers. Thus *the Gods of the heathen were vanity and a lie: they that made them were like unto them: and so was every one who put his trust in them.* Nor was this scheme less deformed by *pollution*. In *Egypt*, *Syria*, *Persia*, *Babylon*, and *Hindostan*, particularly, both matrons and virgins were religiously consecrated to impurity.

By the cruelty, falsehood, and pollution, acted *here*, the heathen nations were effectually prepared to perpetrate the same wickedness *elsewhere*. Here, it was sanctioned by [illegible] mind, therefore, could not consider it as very criminal [illegible]. As all were thus taught; these nations became generally corrupted

beyond every thing, which the most sanguine imagination could have conceived.

All this, however, is naturally the result of Idolatry. That, which is the object of religious worship, is of course the most sublime and perfect object, which is realized by the devotee. When this object, therefore, is low, debased, impure; when it is fraught with falsehood, injustice, and cruelty; sunk, as it is, immeasurably below the proper character of a god, it still keeps its station of superiority; and is still regarded with the reverence, due to the highest known object of contemplation. Of consequence, all things, be[illegible] hold a station in the eye of the mind, [illegible]. The mind [illegible] of [illegible] conceptions, [illegible] debased object conforms all its views, [illegible], and conduct, to [illegible] deity; and, while it worships him with a mixture of [illegible], it extends the same folly and wickedness in its various conduct towards all other beings, with which it corresponds. Thus a debased God becomes the foundation of a debased religion; and a debased religion, of universal turpitude of character.

Ably. *Hence, we see, that the Scriptures represent Idolatry justly; and annex to it no higher punishment, than it deserves.*

The debased and miserable character, which I have described, was the real character of the *Canaanites*. They were guilty of all these iniquities; and were, therefore, justly the objects of the divine indignation. Infinitely remote from that innocence, attributed to them by Infidels, they had grown worse and worse, under the ordinary influence of Idolatry, from the beginning. At length, their *iniquity became full*; and they were wiped away as a blot, as a stain, upon the Creation of God.

The same things are, with some qualifications, true of the *Israelites*. In the progress of their various defections to Idolatry, they became corrupted in the same dreadful manner, were guilty of the same impurity, cruelty, and falsehood; butchered each other without remorse; were disloyal, rebellious, treacherous; followed abandoned villains, to overturn the government, established by God himself; waged furious civil wars with each other; and made *their sons pass through the fire unto Moloch*. God, with wonderful patience and mercy, waited long; and sent many prophets to reclaim them. Y[illegible]ning cured them of their Idolatry, but their final overthrow, and their deportation to *Babylon*.

What is true of these nations, with regard to this subject, is true of the heathen in general. All the nations, who have been devoted to Idolatry, have addicted themselves to these, and all other, crimes; and have been dreadfully depraved in their whole moral character. Wherever men of discernment and integrity have resided among such nations, and given an account of them to the public; this melancholy truth has, notwithstanding all the allega-

tions of Infidels to the contrary, been evinced beyond every decent denial, or reasonable doubt.

5thly. *These observations teach us the wisdom and goodness of God in separating the Jews from mankind, as a peculiar people to himself.*

All the preceding experiment, which had been made in the Providence of God, for the purpose of preserving, in this corrupted world, the knowledge and worship of Jehovah, had failed of accomplishing the end. God had revealed himself in an immediate and extraordinary manner to our first parents, and to their descendants through many generations. All these, also, he had planted in a world, which, though under the curse, retained still so much of its original nature, and was fraught with so many blessings, as to continue the life of man through a thousand years. Under this dispensation, *all flesh corrupted his way upon the earth.* The world *was filled with violence;* and became so universally profligate, that *it repented the Lord, that he had made man.* The deluge, then, emptied it of its inhabitants, to sweep away wickedness, which could no longer be endured from under the whole heaven. Even this did not cure the evil. The same spirit, notwithstanding the remembrance of this terrible destruction, revived, almost immediately, among the descendants of Noah; and, at the time when *Abraham* was called, all nations were on the point of losing the knowledge of the one, living, and true God. Had not the *Jews* been separated from the rest of mankind; and by mercies, and miracles, of a singular nature, recalled, from time to time, to the worship of Jehovah; this glorious Being would long since have been forgotten in the world. We ourselves, and all the inhabitants of this happy land, should now have been bowing ourselves to stocks; offering up our children as victims to Moloch; and prostituting ourselves, and our families, in religious and regular pollution before the shrines of Idolatry. The only knowledge, the only worship, of Jehovah, at this day existing in the world, is derived, ultimately, from the Revelation, which he made of himself to the *Jews,* and the various dispensations by which it was preserved.

6thly. *We learn hence also the malignant nature of Atheism.*

Atheism, like Idolatry, is infinitely remote from being a mere innocent speculation; a mere set of harmless opinions. In its very nature it involves the grossest falsehood, injustice, and ingratitude; and is, of course, the parent of all other sins, in all possible degrees. The mind, in which it exists, must, in order to the reception of it, have become the seat of wonderful depravity, and is prepared by it for every conceivable perpetration. I do not deny, that an Atheist may live decently in the world. But, whenever this is the fact, he lives in this manner, solely because the commission of the several crimes, to which he finds a temptation, is accompanied by some apprehended danger, some serious

difficulty, or some painful inconvenience; some evil so great, as to overbalance the pleasure, which he expects from committing the crime. But he never lives in this manner from principle; never from the want of disposition to sin. Let it be barely convenient, and safe, for him; and there is no iniquity, which his head will not contrive, his heart cherish, and his hands carry into execution. From an Atheist, no man, no people, no human interest, can ever be safe; unless when danger to himself preserves them from the effects of his profligacy.

7thly. *We see with what exact propriety the Scriptures have represented the violation of our immediate duty to God as the source of all other sin.*

Impiety is plainly the beginning, the fountain, of guilt, from which flows every stream. Those who are thus false, unjust, and ungrateful, to God, will of course exhibit the same conduct, with respect to their fellow-creatures. Virtue is a single, indivisible principle; operating, *as virtue*, towards every being, with whom it is concerned; towards God, towards our neighbour, and towards ourselves. Towards all, it operates alike; producing, in every case, the fruits of virtue, viz. virtuous affections and virtuous conduct. As the obligations to be virtuous towards God, or in other words, to be pious, are the highest possible; so he, who is insensible to these obligations, and violates them, will be insensible to all other obligations, and violate them also. The apprehension, that virtue can exist partially, that is, that we can be disposed to perform our duty towards God and not towards man, or towards man and not towards God, is chimerical; the result of ignorance, or inconsideration; and unsupported either by facts or arguments.

External virtue, as it is sometimes called, that is, moral goodness, supposed to exist in external conduct only, and unsupported by virtue in the heart, is a mere dream; a mere shadow. Instead of virtue, it is nothing but convenience; nothing but a pretence; nothing but a cheat. Virtue is inherent in the soul; in the disposition; as light and warmth in the sunbeams; and is the energy of an Intelligent being, voluntarily directed to that which is right and good. If piety, therefore, be not found in a man; he has no pretensions to virtue of any kind.

Such is the scheme of the Scriptures. How plainly is it true! In laying the foundation of virtue here, how evidently have they laid the only possible foundation! And how strongly do they approve themselves to the conscience, as truth; and as deserving the character of a Revelation from God! At the same time, how evidently are all other schemes of Morality visionary and vain; buildings erected on sand; and destined, from the beginning, to a speedy and final overthrow!

SERMON CI.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 4—6.—*Thou shalt not [illegible]*

THE Command in the [illegible] was considered in the preceding [illegible] *the acknowledgment of false Gods, [illegible] ship of Idols; or Idolatry, [illegible]* [illegible] to false Gods, is not [illegible] but the name, in the strict sense, is applicable to the [illegible] only; or of those images, pictures, and other symbols, which were considered by the heathen as representations of their Gods.

In the preceding [illegible] that the duty enjoined in the first Command, is of such [illegible] governed by the dictates of reason, an express [illegible] it would seem in a great measure unnecessary, if not altogether superfluous. Of the Command in the [illegible] observed, that, to such a [illegible] could seem more unnecessary, or [illegible] the eye of reason can appear more wonderful, or more improbable, than that beings, endowed with intelligence, should bow themselves before the stock of a tree, or acknowledge an [illegible] or carved by themselves, as an object of their worship. [illegible] has, however, in the most ample manner refuted [illegible] very natural, and very obvious, dictates of reason; and [illegible] to the everlasting disgrace of the human name, that not only some, but almost all men have, throughout most ages of the world, [illegible] themselves before these miserable objects; and in their [illegible] their books, their laws, and their religious services, acknowledged them as their Gods. The importance, the absolute necessity, of this Command, therefore, are evinced beyond every reasonable question.

The observations, which I propose to make concerning it, I shall comprise under the following heads:

I. *The History of Idol Worship;*

II. *Its Extent;* and,

III. *The Manner in which it has been performed.*

I shall refer to you a brief and very general History of Idol Worship.

[illegible] the precise time, in [illegible] evident, [illegible] to the Chal- [illegible] year 1757 [illegible] : [illegible] and [illegible] only a few the death of [illegible] [illegible] *Abraham*, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

fabulous history of their origin and character, worshipped with the same numerous and diversified rites, and having the same various and peculiar offices assigned to them. The best account of this extraordinary fact, which I have met with, is contained in *Bryant's Analysis of the ancient heathen Mythology*. This learned and able writer has, in my view, rendered it highly probable, that this religion was begun by the *Cushites*, or that mixed multitude, who attached themselves to *Nimrod*, according to the common chronology, about the year of the world 1750; and formed themselves, seven years after, into a nation, or body politic, under his dominion. These people, in their dispersion, spread over many parts of the earth; and by their enterprise, heroism, arts, and ingenuity, appear to have had the first great and controlling influence over the affairs of men, both secular and religious: an influence, the effects of which wonderfully remain at the present time.

The objects, and the rites, of worship, adopted by these people, seem almost all to have been found in the history of the deluge, of *Noah*, and of his family. At first, they probably intended only to commemorate, in a solemn manner, this awful and disastrous event, and the wonderful preservation of this family. That a man of so excellent and extraordinary a character; a man, singled out by the voice of God from a world, on account of his piety; a man, who was the only pious head of a family, amidst all the millions of the human race; a man, who had survived the ruins of one world, and begun the settlement and population of another; a man, who had been miraculously preserved from an universal deluge; a man, to whom the postdiluvians owed all their religion, their knowledge, their arts, and even their existence; should be commemorated with singular feelings, particularly with singular veneration, was a thing of course. Equally natural, and necessary, was it, that the most solemn remembrance should be retained, and expressed, of such an amazing event, as the destruction of a world. High veneration for any being, easily slides, in such minds as ours, into religious reverence: especially when it is publicly, and solemnly, expressed by ceremonies of an affecting and awful nature. When *Noah* particularly, and his sons generally, had been often, and for a series of years, commemorated in this manner; the history of man has amply taught us, that it was no strange thing to find them ultimately raised to the rank and character of deities. This event would naturally take place the sooner, on account of the astonishing facts, included in their singular history. The imagination, wrought up to enthusiasm and terror, while realizing the astonishing scenes, through which they had passed, could hardly fail to lend its powerful aid towards this act of Canonization; and would, without much reluctance, attribute to them a divine character. If we remember how much more willingly mankind have ever worshipped false gods, than the true One; we shall, I think without much hesitation, admit the proba-

bility of the account, which has here been given concerning this subject.

The proofs, that the authors of Gentilism had a primary reference to *Noah*, his family, and their history, appear to me to be complete in the different symbols, ceremonies, objects of commemoration, and names of persons and things, together with the whole mythological history of this subject. Multitudes of allusions are found in all these things to *Noah* himself; his three sons; the number of his family; their singular history; the deluge; the ark; the dove; the olive-branch; and various other particulars. Many of these are too explicit to be mistaken; and many others, less explicit, yet taken together, and in connexion with these, corroborate, with no small force, the account which has here been given.

When this scheme was once begun; it was a thing of course, that it should be rapidly progressive. When mankind had departed from the true God; it was natural for a restless imagination to multiply the objects of its dependence, and worship. Among the objects, which would easily engross the religious attention of these people, and of all who were inclined to their system, the sun, moon, and stars, would undoubtedly be some of the first. The exaltation, splendour, immutability, and beneficial influence, of these glorious luminaries, are so affecting to the human mind, as to hold, aways, a distinguished place in its contemplations. Nothing visible is more fitted to excite sublime emotions, or to awaken curiosity and astonishment; nor, when God was once forgotten, to inspire religious reverence. Accordingly we find, that before the days of *Job* the worship of the heavenly bodies had become extensive. This divine Writer* says, chap. xxxi. 26—28, *If I beheld the sun, when it shined, or the moon, walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand; this also were an iniquity, to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above.* *Job* probably lived between 1600 and 1700 years before Christ; or about three hundred and fifty years after the birth of *Abraham;* according to the common chronology. With this account of the early worship of these celestial objects, profane history entirely accords.

But the mind was unsatisfied even with these deities. The business of multiplying them was carried on with astonishing rapidity. The worship of deceased men had already been rendered to *Noah* and his family. This was soon extended to others; and then to others still; in such a manner, that the number soon became enormous. *Hesiod* informs us, that the δαιμονες, or *demons*, who appear to have been no other than departed men, and who were supposed to inhabit the middle regions between earth and heaven, amounted to more than thirty thousand. In opposition to these

*I consider *Job* as the author of this book.

deceased beings. God is especially called in the Sacred Volume the *living God*.* From deceased men the transition was easy to animals; to vegetables; to inanimate objects; and to the visionary beings of imagination. Gods were soon found every where; in mountains, rivers, springs, the ocean, the earth, the winds, light, darkness, groves; and generally in every thing, which was particularly interesting to the fancy.

Among the reasons, which influenced the mind to this restless and endless creation of deities, *the first place is due, perhaps, to the apprehension, that this conduct was an evidence of peculiar piety; and therefore a direct mode of obtaining blessings from some, or other, of the objects worshipped*. Another reason was, *the complaisance of one nation to another, which led them to adopt their respective deities*. The objects of worship were, to a great extent, the same, in different nations: yet, being called by different names, and worshipped with ceremonies, differing, in some degree at least, according to the diversity of manners in different, nations, they came, at length, to be considered as different Gods. The *Athenians*, under the influence of both these causes, appear to have adopted most of the deities, of whom they had any knowledge.

Another reason for this conduct judiciously assigned by *Dr. Blair*, is, *the tendency of the human imagination to lend animation, thought, and agency, to the several inanimate objects, with which it is conversant, and by which it is strongly affected; particularly to those which are solemn, awful, and sublime*. The transition from the personification of these objects to the belief, that they are really animated by an indwelling, conscious principle, and to a consequent religious reverence for them, is neither unnatural, nor difficult, after the mind has once become devoted to Idolatry. In the early stages of society, the *Imagination* is eminently strong, active, and susceptible. Always ready to admire, to be astonished, to be transported, it easily acquires an ascendency over the *Reason*, then always weak; and, together with the *passions*, directs almost the whole conduct of man.

It is scarcely credible, that the human mind originally worshipped inanimate objects *directly*. The absurdity of believing, that that, which had no life in itself, and therefore no agency, nor consciousness, could hear prayers, or answer them; could be gratified with praises, or sacrifices; could inflict judgments, or confer benefits; is so palpable, that even a savage can hardly be supposed to have admitted it. Much less can those people have admitted it, who appear to have been the originators of idolatry. So far were the *Cushites* from being savages, that they appear to have been the most enlightened, and enterprising, of the human race, at the time when Gentilism commenced. It is highly probable, that all these objects were at first regarded as peculiar manifestations of

* Farmar on Miracles.

the real Deity; fitted especially to display his attributes to man, and to make the most forcible impressions of his agency. In process of time, however, they began to be considered, especially, by the ignorant multitude, as being really Gods: and the worship, originally addressed to a being, supposed to be manifested by the symbol, seems ultimately to have been rendered to the symbol itself. The stock and the stone, intended, at first, to bring the real Deity before the senses, took, at length, the place of that Deity; and became, in the end, the real objects of worship.

It is evident from several ancient writers, quoted by *Shuckford*, particularly *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Herodian*, and *Pausanius*, that *pillars of stone*, and after them *rude blocks of wood*, were *the first symbols*, made by mankind of their several deities. Such, it is supposed, were the *teraphim* of *Laban*, stolen from him by his daughter: and such, plainly, were the religious symbols, formed, at early periods, by the *Greeks*, and some other nations. Stones, in their native, rude state, such, for example, as that erected by *Jacob* at *Bethel*, seem extensively to have been set up, at early periods, with various religious views, and designs, by the worshippers of the true God. The pillars, devoted to idolatrous purposes, seem to have been derived from these. They were not, however, long satisfied with these unsightly objects. The *Egyptians* appear to have had carved images, devoted to the purposes of religion, and, without any doubt, molten ones also, before the time of *Moses*; for we find the children of *Israel* forming a molten calf, at the foot of Mount *Sinai*. The practice of forming Idols in this manner, being once begun, seems to have spread with great rapidity, among the nations, who maintained a mutual correspondence. In the more distant and insulated colonies of men, their existence began at much later periods. In *Italy*, all visible symbols of the Deity were prohibited by *Numa Pompilius*; and were not introduced into *Rome*, according to the testimony of *Plutarch*, so late as one hundred and seventy years after the building of that city: that is, A. M. 3426: in the time of *Nebuchadnezzar*. Among the savages of this country, images seem to have been little used.

II. *I shall now make a few observations concerning the Extent of Idol worship.*

The system of Gentilism commenced, as has been already remarked, in the plain of *Shinar*. The *Cushites*, who were the authors of it, ruled, for a short period, most of their brethren in the neighbouring countries. Soon after the confusion of languages, an event, which seems to have been chiefly confined to them and their associates, and which entirely disqualified them for all the efforts depending on union and concert, they began to disperse into different parts of the earth. Speedily after this, they appear to have been attacked by their brethren of the family of *Shem*, settled at *Nineveh* and its neighbourhood, and heretofore reduced

under their dominion. On this occasion, the *Cushites* were completely routed, and forced to fly with great expedition into different parts of the earth. One body of them fled into *Hindostan;* in the records of which country various events of their history are still found. Another made their way into *Canaan;* where they were again attacked by the same people, under the command of *Chedorlaomer,* and again overthrown. Hence they fled into *Egypt;* the western parts of *Arabia;* and the northern and eastern parts of *Abyssinia.* From *Egypt* they were again driven; and went into *Phœnicia;* the *Lesser Asia; Greece; Thrace; Italy;* and other countries, bordering on the *Mediterranean* and *Euxine* seas. Whithersoever they went, they carried with them their enterprize, arts, learning, and religion. Most of the countries in which they settled, embraced their idolatry at early periods. At a very early period, we find it the religion of the ancestors of *Abraham* in *Chaldea.* These were descendants of *Shem;* who outlived *Abraham* himself; and who, with all his piety and authority, was still unable to prevent this senseless desertion of the true religion. In *Hindostan* also, it spread, at a very early date; as it did also in the western countries of *Asia,* in Egypt, and most, or all, of the eastern parts of *Europe.* The worship of the true God was, however, not universally renounced, until many ages after the commencement of Gentilism. *Melchisedec, Job,* his friends, and undoubtedly many of his countrymen; the people of the *Thebais,* or *Upper Egypt,* and probably many others in different parts of the world; still retained the true religion, long after idolatry had been embraced by a great portion of the human race. After the settlement of the *Israelites* in *Canaan,* we find few traces of the true religion. We are not, however, to suppose it to have been wholly banished from all other countries, till some time afterward. The precise period, when the whole world, beside the *Jews,* became idolatrous, I am unable to determine.

In the fourth century after the birth of Christ, a new kind of idolatry, or rather idolatry in a new form, began to exist in *the Christian Church.* This was *the worship of Saints and Angels;* and, afterwards, of *images, pictures, relics,* and other fantastical objects of devotion. This Idolatry, though at first vigorously opposed by the body of the Church, and afterwards by individuals and small collections of men, spread speedily over the whole of *Christendom;* and was adopted both by the learned, and unlearned, of every country. Thus in one form, and another, the worship of false Gods has prevailed throughout most of the inhabited world, and the greatest part of the reign of time. I shall now,

III. *Make a few observations on the Manner, in which this worship has been performed.*

I have already mentioned *Idols* as being intended originally to be *means of worshipping God; symbols of the Divine Character and Attributes,* designed to impress them powerfully on the senses,

and thus to excite in the mind animated sentiments of awe and devotion. Beside the use of these images, Gentilism copied closely, in its worship, the ritual, originally enjoined by God, and adopted in the pure worship. *Prayers*, *Praises*, *Sacrifices*, and *Oblations*, were all offered up to its various deities. *Fastings*, *Ablutions*, and *Penance of many kinds*, were enjoined on their infatuated votaries. *Temples* were erected to them; Altars built; Shrines formed; and regular *Orders of Priests* established, and consecrated to an exclusive performance of their Religious Services. *Oracles* also, which were sometimes pretended expressions of the will of these Gods concerning the immediate duties of men, and sometimes professed predictions of future events, were delivered in most or all of the countries, where idolatry prevailed. The *Victims* offered, were to a great extent the same, which were prescribed in the law of *Moses*: probably the same, which had been offered from the beginning: for we find *Noah*, immediately after the deluge, *offering, of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, burnt-offerings on the altar*, which he had made. It well deserves to be remarked, that in all the records of heathen worship, which have come down to us, the votaries appear *neither to have asked, nor given thanks, for moral good.* Secular enjoyments, of every kind, they universally solicited; but goodness of heart seems never to have been thought of as a gift coming from the Gods. Accordingly, *Cicero*, who must have been well acquainted with this subject, says, Who ever thanked the Gods for his Virtue?

Processions seem also to have been extensively used as a part of the religious ceremonial of Gentilism. These, together with the magnificence of its temples, the costliness of its images, and the pomp of its services, were all intended to affect the senses in the deepest manner. Indeed, nothing else could be done to keep this system alive. Argument was only hostile to it. The light of sound Reason would have dispelled its darkness in a moment. But the Senses, and through them the Imagination, could be strongly addressed; and these could entirely govern the man.

To add to the splendour of all the other objects, connected with this service, and to render the oblation more affecting to the suppliant, as well as more acceptable to the Deity, offerings of every kind were made more and more expensive. Gold, silver, gems, the choicest aromatics, and unguents and essences made of them, still more precious than gold itself, were frequent presents to the Gods of Idolatry. Hecatombs were early substituted for single victims: and, to render the worship still more propitiatory, these were soon exchanged for human sacrifices. To complete the efficacy of the oblation, these sacrifices were selected from the brightest and most promising youths of the nation; the sons of the noble and princely, and infants in the most lovely and endearing period of life. Victims of this kind, also, were multiplied to a wonderful degree. Twenty thousand human beings are supposed

to have expired, annually, on the altars of *Mexico* alone; and all these were offered up with circumstances of cruelty and horror, which, but for the most undeniable testimony, would transcend belief. To these dreadful services, violating every feeling of humanity, but wonderfully affecting the imagination, were added ablutions, burdensome on account of their frequency, and often on account of the great distance of the sacred waters from the residence of the suppliant; and various kinds of penance, terrible and excruciating in their nature, and overwhelming by their duration, were customarily added. Thus, though Reason and Humanity were wounded, and prostrated, the Imagination was completely possessed by the demons of superstition: and miserable Man, voluntarily losing the government of himself, became the sport of fiends and furies, and fitted only for the gloom and chains of bedlam.

With the same design, and under the same impulse, mankind sought the most solitary, and the most awful, recesses, for the celebration of their religious rites.* In dark and lonely groves, on the summits of lofty eminences, and in the depths of awful caverns, the most solemn rites of Gentile worship were performed at early periods. These scenes of stillness, solitude, and terror, were perfectly suited to rouse the imagination to ecstasy, and to enhance the gloomy fervours of their religion. To them succeeded temples, of astonishing magnificence; exhausting, in their erection, the wealth of nations, and the labour of ages. These, also, were ornamented within, and without, with every thing which riches, ingenuity, and art, could supply; or which was calculated to impress the mind of the votary with astonishment, religious awe, and profound reverence for the beings, to whom these structures were consecrated.

It cannot, I think, be necessary for me to employ any arguments, for the purpose of enforcing the prohibition in the text on the minds of my audience. The importance of it to the *Jews*, at the time when it was given, and to the great body of mankind, both before and since, is abundantly evident from the observations, which have been already made. But in this land, and in the present state of religious society here, no transgression is less likely to exist, than that, which is forbidden in this passage of Scripture. Instead of attempting to enforce this precept, therefore, on those who hear me; I shall employ the remaining time in making a few practical

REMARKS.

1st. *How degrading, melancholy, and sinful a character is here presented to us, of Man.*

* See Maurice's Antiquities, Vol. ii.

This subject, perhaps more than any other, holds out to our view a wonderful exhibition of the depravity of the human heart. What sight can be more strange, more humiliating, more debasing, to an Intelligent nature, than that of rational and immortal minds, originally virtuous as they came from the hand of God, destined to the possession of endless life, and formed for such noble and sublime purposes, prostrating themselves not only before the sun, and moon, and *the host of heaven*, but before men, evil spirits, visionary beings, animals, vegetables, blocks of wood, and figures of stone! All these beings, such minds have converted into Deities; and, falling down before them, have said unto them, *Deliver us: for ye are our Gods.* Is it not beyond measure amazing, to see a human being, a rational, immortal being, go into a forest; cut down a tree; transport it home on a wagon; burn one part of it on his hearth; hew, and carve, another part of it into an idol; and call it a God! Is it not amazing, to see such a man confessing himself inferior to a stock, fashioned by his own hands, acknowledging his dependence on it for life, his blessings, and his hopes; placing his trust in it; building to it temples; erecting altars; and offering up to it prayers and praises! Is it not more amazing, to behold the same man sacrificing living victims to a mass of wood; rational victims; nay, more, youths of the noblest families, the brightest talents, and the fairest hopes; nay, more still, his own beloved offspring; the children of his own bowels!

What shall we say then, what shall we not say, when we behold kings, heroes, and sages, employed in this manner? When we see towns, provinces, countries, and continents, nay, the whole earth, all uniting in this infatuated worship; with an universal forgetfulness of JEHOVAH, the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of all beings; notwithstanding the hourly demonstration of his perfections and agency in the visible universe!

Still more astonished ought we to be, if we can be more astonished, to see the *Israelites*, after all the wonders of *Egypt*, *Sinai*, and *Canaan*, in the midst of all the marvellous blessings given to their nation; with the word of God in their hands; while his Prophets were daily announcing to them his revelations; while his awful oracles from the mercy-seat were still sounding in their ears; within his temple; before his altar; and beneath the awful splendour of the Shechinah; *forgetting the God that made them, and lightly esteeming the Rock of their salvation;* wandering after the Idolatry of the heathen; bowing before their Gods; partaking in their sacrifices; absorbed in their follies; and embracing their wickedness with all their heart.

To complete this dreadful picture of human depravity, the whole Christian world, with few, very few exceptions, was, for many centuries, buried and lost in this stupid, shameful, monstrous worship. The progeny of *Noah*, who began this unnatural defection from their Creator, became Idolaters, while the waves of

the Deluge had scarcely ceased to roar around this wasted world. The *Jews* became Idolaters at the foot of Sinai, beneath the thunders of the Almighty. The Christian world became Idolaters, when the Redeemer was in a sense bleeding on the cross before their eyes. How debased, then, how sinful, how miserable, a being is man!

2dly. *These observations teach us the indispensable Necessity of a Revelation to such a world as this.*

It has been shown, that, at an early period after the flood, the whole human race lost the knowledge of the true God, and sunk into the moral stupidity and wickedness of Gentilism. That rational beings should be created, or exist, for any End, which does not involve in it the knowledge and worship of the true God, is a doctrine, indefensible by a single rational argument. What purpose could beings, destitute of this knowledge and worship, be supposed to answer? What purpose, I mean, which God could propose, or which he could admit as useful, as desirable, as worthy of himself? Can he be supposed to have formed rational and immortal beings, to be ignorant of Him; the only Source of good, of wisdom, excellence, and happiness? Can he be supposed to have made such beings capable of knowing and glorifying him, for the debased and wretched end of worshipping Gods of gold, silver, wood, and stone? Of worshipping them, also, with services deformed with falsehood, cruelty, and impurity; and attended by a total destruction of all wisdom, and all virtue? Such, however, to a vast extent has been, and such, without Revelation, would have for ever been, the condition of mankind. Revelation, only, has taught, and preserved, the knowledge and worship of the true God in this guilty world: and *Mohammedans and Infidels*, are no less indebted to Revelation for this knowledge, than are *Jews* and *Christians*.

Piety has been heretofore shown to be the foundation of all other Virtue; the first and greatest branch of this glorious subject; without which, the virtue, exercised towards our fellow-creatures, and towards ourselves, cannot exist. But piety is impossible, on the system of Gentilism. The great constituents of this divine affection of the heart are Love, Reverence, and Resignation. But how can love, reverence, and resignation, be exercised towards an ox; a crocodile; a cat; a frog; a fly; an onion; a stick of wood; or a block of marble? Here, plainly, there is nothing to be loved, reverenced, or regarded with resignation. In the mean time, perpetual frauds, falsehoods, cruelties, and impurities, added a total corruption of all the affections, and conduct, of man towards himself, and his fellow-men, to the supreme debasement of his character, produced, of course, by the acknowledgment and worship of heathen Gods. This system, therefore, banished moral excellence from the mind; and introduced into its place every thing that was despicable, worthless, and wicked. He, who does

not see the absolute necessity of a Revelation to beings, situated as the inhabitants of this world were, must be voluntarily blind, and must love to be deceived. You, my hearers, are now in the house of God. You know his existence, presence, character, and agency. You are employed in his worship. You have heard the glorious tidings of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love. The Redeemer of mankind, and the expiation which he has made of sin, have been announced to you, from the cradle. *This house* is to you *the gate of heaven.* Here the highway commences, which leads to that glorious world. Immortal life here dawns upon you. A voice, from amidst the throne of God, invites you, here, to *take of the water of life freely.* All these blessings are brought to you by Revelation. But for Revelation, you would have been, this day, worshipping a demon, or an ox; or falling down before the stock of a tree. But for Revelation, you might, this day, have been imbruing your hands in the blood of one of your number, butchered as a miserable victim to *Moloch.* *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and thanksgiving, be unto our God for* this *unspeakable gift through* Jesus Christ, our Lord! Amen.

SERMON CII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.—THE NATURE OF PROFANENESS.

EXODUS xx. 7.—*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.*

IN the two preceding discourses, I have considered, at some length, *the nature of the sins, forbidden in the first and second Commands of the Decalogue.* I did not think it necessary, after the ample discussion of the duties of piety, so lately delivered from this place, to dwell, anew, upon the same duties, as required by *the former of these Commands;* nor, on account of the state of Christian society in this country, to insist on the prohibition, contained in *the latter.* Considering the subjects of both, as sufficiently canvassed for the design of these discourses; I shall now proceed to examine *the Nature of the precept, given to us in the Text.*

The Name of God, as used in the Scriptures, has by divines of all descriptions, been generally regarded as denoting his *Name literally; his Titles of every kind; his Perfections;* and generally, *every thing, by which his Character, and his Pleasure, are made known to mankind.*

To take the name of God in vain is to use all, or either, of these, to no valuable purpose; or to evil purposes; or with falsehood; or with irreverence.

Of him, who does this, God declares, that *he will not hold him guiltless:* that is, *that he will hold him guilty;* especially, in the great day of trial and decision.

In discoursing on this subject, I shall examine,

I. *The Nature;*

II. *The Guilt;* and,

III. *The Danger of this Sin.*

I. I shall examine with attention the Nature of this Sin.

The Nature of this Sin may be advantageously unfolded by considering it *as it respects the Name, and the Works of God.*

By the Name of God, I intend the *several names, and titles, by which he has been pleased to distinguish himself, and to manifest his character to mankind. In his Works I shall include every thing, which he has wrought, instituted, and declared, as an especial manifestation of his presence, perfections, and agency.*

The Name of God is *profaned*, that is, *treated with the irreverence*, which is the object of the prohibition in the text,

1st. *In Perjury, or False Swearing.*

Ye shall not swear by my name falsely; neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God; I am Jehovah. Lev. xx. 12. To swear falsely is *to invoke God to witness a lie.* It is scarcely possible to conceive of a grosser insult to the Creator of the Universe than this. He, as all men perfectly well know, infinitely loves truth, and infinitely detests falsehood; and has said, that *there shall in no wise enter into the heavenly city any one, who loveth, or maketh a lie.* To call him, then, in this solemn manner, to witness a falsehood, is to laugh at his love of truth, his disposition and power to support it, and that glorious purity of his character, before which *the heavens are unclean, and the Angels charged with folly.*

2dly. *When the Name of God is used in any light, irreverent manner; the same sin is committed.*

The most prominent, and most usual, modes of transgressing, in this manner, are *profane cursing and swearing.* In cases of this nature, the Name of God is frequently employed to accompany, and enhance, diversion; frequently as the means of giving vent, with peculiar force, to the violence of anger; often, also, is it used to aggravate denunciations of revenge; and very often dishonoured by unhallowed lips in imprecations of evil on our fellow-men. In every one of these methods, the Name of God is profaned, times without number, every day.

This glorious and awful Being, as I have already observed, has all possible claims to the highest reverence. Every thing teaches us this doctrine: the Creation and the Providence of God; Reason and Revelation. It is enforced by every page of divine truth; and by every dictate of the human conscience. In a word, on all things within and without us, that *glorious and fearful Name,* Jehovah, *our God,* is written in sunbeams. In the same clear and luminous manner is every where displayed the indispensable duty of reverencing him with that *fear of the Lord, which is Wisdom, and that departure from evil, which is understanding.* Nor can his claims to the performance of this duty be ever relinquished.

Indeed, mankind appear, almost universally, to possess a clear conviction of the truth of this doctrine, and of the indispensable nature of this duty. In all ordinary circumstances, the worst of men acknowledge both, without hesitation; even those, who most frequently, and most heinously, commit the sin, which the doctrine prohibits. Of this sin God seems to have established in the consciences of mankind a stronger and more uniform disapprobation, than of most others. In few cases of transgression, is there so little disagreement as in this. Almost all other sins, men labour to justify. I know not, that I have ever heard any man attempt soberly to justify profaneness of this nature. He, whose tongue is still vibrating with cursing and swearing, will usually acknowledge that his conduct is inexcusable. Arguments to prove the reality of this sin, are therefore unnecessary.

3dly. *We are guilty of this sin, also, when we invoke the Name of God lightly and irreverently in prayer, or without that seriousness, humility, and religious awe, which are indispensable to the acceptable performance of this duty.*

At all times, in all circumstances, are we required to render to Jehovah our supreme reverence, and unfeigned devotion, whenever he becomes the object of our contemplation, or our conduct. His character is always, and immutably, the same, infinitely great, awful, holy, and excellent. Our relation to him, also, is invariably the same: that of rational and dependent creatures. But especially is this reverence, and devotion, to exist in *prayer*. In the performance of this duty, so solemn in its nature, and bringing us so near the throne of majesty and mercy, the character of God, our own inferiority, dependence, obligations, sin, guilt, danger, and infinite necessity of the divine favour and blessing, are brought up in full view, and forced home upon the heart. Here, therefore, all inducements to reverential thoughts of God, and all advantages for entertaining them, are presented to the mind. To exhibit irreverence, in this case, therefore, is to break over these inducements, and sottishly to neglect these advantages. God, here, is not treated irreverently in the hour of inconsideration, of strong temptation and surprising sin; but in the season of seriousness, and professed devotion. We *worship* God *acceptably*, when we worship him with *reverence and godly fear. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence by all them that are about him.* The same spirit is, in the same manner, demanded in our [illegible] and secret devotions. When, therefore, the mind regards its Maker, in this act of devotion, with lightness and irreverence; it is not only clear, that it is guilty of the sin, forbidden in the text, and of great sin; but it is fearfully probable, when this is habitually its conduct, that it is at all times the subject of a general spirit of profanation.

4thly. *A still more heinous transgression of the same nature, is Using the Name of God Irreverently in the solemn act of Dedicating the Soul to him in the Covenant of Grace.*

In this, the most solemn transaction in which man is ever concerned on this side of the grave, all things, even some which are not applicable to the taking of an oath, or the duty of prayer, conspire, in the highest degree, to make it affecting to the mind. The day, the place, the occasion, the transaction, are invested with peculiar solemnity by their very nature. A pre-eminent solemnity, also, is thrown upon this transaction by the Character of the person, immediately concerned; a Sinner, professedly restored to the divine favour: the subject of dedication; an immortal mind: the Being to whom the dedication is made; a pardoning God: the means by which the worshipper has been permitted thus to dedicate himself; the righteousness of the Redeemer: the ends, for which he thus offers himself up; the glory of God, and his own

eternal salvation. All these things, united, plainly render this the most interesting transaction, in which the soul is ever engaged in the present world. To act lightly and irreverently, then, in a concern so solemn, so eminently affecting, is to be profane, against all inducements to our duty: against some, not existing in any other religious service. In this conduct, all these most sacred things; God, Christ, the work of Redemption, forgiving love, the Sabbath, the Sanctuary, the restoration and salvation of the soul, are, if it be done deliberately, and with understanding, treated with the grossest contempt, and the most impious mockery. In deliberate conduct of this nature, the mind proves itself to be depraved altogether beyond the common measure; and the *conscience* is evidently not far from being *seared, as with an hot iron.*

Generally, he who regards God with levity and irreverence, in any religious service whatever, when this irreverence is directed immediately towards his character, is guilty of profaneness in the mode specified under the second head. In other words, he is guilty of profaneness of the same nature, and existing substantially under the same form, with that which is found in *profane cursing and swearing*. The irreverence, which constitutes the peculiar guilt of this latter sin, exists also in the former; and in both is immediately directed against God himself. Both, therefore, are justly considered as cases of the same nature.

As this sin respects the *Works* of God; or, in other words, *whatever he has done, declared*, or *instituted;* the profaneness, whenever it exists, is exactly the same in its nature, but different in the mode of its existence, from that, exhibited under the former *general head.* In all instances, included under that head, it is directed against God *immediately;* but *mediately* in those now referred to: the irreverence being pointed *immediately against the works themselves*, and *through them against their Author.*

God is often treated with irreverence:

1st. *In the works of Creation and Providence.*

The works of creation and providence are merely manifestations of their Author. In all of them, his character is more or less visible; his wisdom, power, and goodness; his self-existence, and independence; his omnipresence, and omnipotence; his omniscience, and immutability. These perfections are so clearly, and so extensively, manifested in his works, that, without more than common stupidity, we cannot be ignorant of them. Of consequence, we clearly perceive them to be the works of God: and whenever we complain of them, or murmur at them, or despise them, or ridicule them; the complaints, the murmurs, the contempt, and the ridicule, are intended, ultimately, not against the works themselves, but against their Author. No man ever thought of treating in this manner inanimate objects, or mere events. He, who made these objects, and controls these events, is the only being, against whom the irreverence is intentionally directed.

This is so obviously true, that, probably, it was never seriously questioned.

The same sin is committed, in the same manner, whenever we assert, or insinuate, that these works were made to no end; or to no end worthy of their Author. In such a case the character of God is profanely impeached, through his works; because we accuse him of weakness and folly. No folly can be more conspicuous, than that, which is visible in doing any thing, and especially very great things, without any end in view, or without any such end, as is suited to the splendour of the apparatus, or the character of the workman. Of this folly, in the case before us, we accuse God.

Profaneness, of an exactly similar nature, is practised, when, in considering the works of God, we intentionally, or negligently, *keep his Agency out of view*, and attribute to second causes that, which plainly belongs to the First Cause. There are philosophers, and ever have been, who, through choice, or carelessness, have considered the beings and events, in the earth and the visible heavens, as proceeding in a manner, and from a cause, resembling that which the heathen attributed to *fate*. Instead of supposing them to be all directed by an Intelligent Cause to purposes, formed by unerring wisdom, and conducted, regularly, by that wisdom to the accomplishment of these purposes; they are regarded, and spoken of, as operating, of themselves only; without any direction; without any end, to be accomplished; without any wisdom to guide, or intelligent agency to control.

The works of God were by him intended to be, and are in fact, manifestations of himself; proofs of his character, presence, and agency. In this light he requires men continually to regard them; and to refuse this regard is considered by him as grossly wicked, and highly deserving of punishment. Accordingly, *David*, says, Psalm xxviii. 5. *Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.* *Isaiah*, also, chap. v. 12—14, speaking of the *Jews*, says, *They regard not the work of the Lord; neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore, my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore, hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.*

I am apprehensive, that even good men are prone to pay less attention to the works of Creation and Providence, than piety demands and the Scriptures require. We say, and hear, so much concerning the insufficiency of these works to unfold the character of God, and the nature of genuine religion; and find the truth of what we thus say, and hear, so clearly proved; that we are prone, not very unnaturally, to consider them as almost uninstruct-

ive in moral things, and in a great measure useless to the promotion of piety. This, however, is a palpable and dangerous error. The works *alone*, without the aid of the Scriptures, would, I acknowledge, be far less instructive, than they now are, and utterly insufficient to guide us in the way of righteousness. The Scriptures were designed to be a Comment on these works; to explain their nature; and show us the agency, purposes, wisdom, and goodness, of God in their formation. Thus explained, thus illumined, they become means of knowledge, very extensive and eminently useful. He, who does not find in the various, beautiful, sublime, awful, and astonishing objects, presented to us in creation and providence, irresistible and glorious reasons for admiring, adoring, loving, and praising, his Creator, has not a claim to Evangelical piety. *David* did not act in this manner. All, who, like *David*, feel the spirit of the Gospel, will, like him also, rejoice in those works, in which God himself rejoices; will delight to contemplate them with wonder, reverence, and gratitude; will find God, every where, in the works of his hands; and, passing beyond those second causes, which are merely instruments of his agency, will see, every where displayed, the finger, and character, of the divine Workman.

2dly. *The same Irreverence is abundantly exercised towards the Word of God.*

Irreverence, in this particular, exists, in a multitude of forms, and degrees; altogether too numerous to be mentioned on this occasion. I shall select a few from this number.

First; *The Scriptures are not unfrequently made the object, or the means, of sport and jesting. David* says of himself, *My heart standeth in awe at thy word:* and again, addressing his Maker, *O how sweet are thy Words unto my taste!* God, speaking by the Prophet *Isaiah*, says, *To this man will I look; even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my Word. Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word. He shall appear to your joy; and your brethren, that hated you, shall be ashamed.* Such is the character of good men; and such are the promises to those, *who tremble at the word of God.* But how different is the spirit of those, who jest with this sacred and awful volume; who can find sport and merriment in the book, which unfolds the infinitely great, solemn, and awful character of Jehovah; which denounces his wrath against all the workers of iniquity; which opens to our view the Redeemer of mankind on the cross; which discloses to us all the glories of heaven, and the straight and narrow way to that happy world; which presents to us the terrors of hell, with the dreadful road that leads to final perdition; and which shows us ourselves as objects of the divine indignation, in imminent danger of endless ruin, and yet as prisoners of hope and candidates for life eternal! What can be found, here, to excite diversion; to become the theme of gayety, the subject of laughter, the

foundation of amusement and trifling? What must be the spirit of him, who can divert himself over the grave; who can make death the topic of wit; who can laugh before the bar of the final judgment, and sport with the miseries of perdition? He must, indeed, *have forgotten the God that made him, and lightly esteem the Rock of his salvation.*

Secondly; *The same irreverence is exercised, when the Scriptures are neglected. Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy Name.* Psalm cxxxviii. 2. This passage is thus paraphrased by Dr. Watts:

> "I'll sing thy truth and mercy, Lord;
> I'll sing the wonders of thy Word;
> Not all thy works, and names, below,
> So much thy power and glory show."

If God, then, has magnified his Word in this manner; if he has rendered it the means of displaying his character so much more perfectly, than the works of Creation and Providence; if he has thus rendered it immensely important to mankind; if he himself appears in it so immediately, so clearly, and so gloriously; how inexcusable must we be, if we do not regard it with the solemn concern, the deep attention, and the profound reverence, due to his infinite majesty? But negligence of the Scriptures is the absolute prevention, the certain death, of all such emotions. What veneration can he possess for the Bible, or for the Author of it, who leaves it to moulder on a shelf; or who reads it, when he reads it at all, with carelessness and stupidity; who is equally regardless of its doctrines, and its precepts; and who renders to it, universally, less respect than to a novel, or a play?

Thirdly; *The same irreverence is exercised towards the Scriptures, when we do not duly respect their authority.* When the Scriptures are acknowledged to be the Word of God, an end is put to all questions concerning the truth of their doctrines, and the reasonableness of their precepts. If they are *his* Word; every thing, contained in them, unless it be some error of a transcriber, or printer, is true, and right. Nor is this all. As *all Scripture is given by inspiration of God;* so he has declared the whole to be *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.* As they are; he has declared, that they are the genuine means of *perfecting the man of God*, and of *furnishing him thoroughly unto every good work.* The plain duty of all men, therefore, is carefully to understand, implicitly to believe, and exactly to obey, them. If, then, we find some doctrines partially revealed; some mysterious, and inexplicable in their nature; and these, or others, contradicting our own pre-conceived opinions: if we doubt, or disbelieve, such doctrines, because our own philosophy is unsatisfied with them, opposed to them, or unable to explain them: we wholly fail of the reverence, due to Him, who has declared

them; and, in a manner highly affrontive, impeach his wisdom and veracity.

The *Bereans received the word*, preached by the Apostles, *with all readiness of mind:* and, to be satisfied whether it was true, did not appeal to their own reason, but to *the Scriptures;* which they *searched daily*, for this end. All, who possess the liberal and noble-minded disposition, ascribed to them, will pursue exactly the same conduct; and will say, with *St. Paul*, *Let God be true, but every man a liar.* It was from this disposition, that they *believed*, in the Evangelical sense, and were saved. All, who possess the same spirit, will share in the same faith, and the same salvation. What can be more preposterous, more indecent, more irreverential to God, than for beings *of yesterday, who know nothing*, to question the wisdom, and the truth, of his declarations; and, instead of believing what he has said, upon the ground of his veracity, to insist on perceiving, before we give credit to it, the truth and reasonableness of the doctrines declared, by means of our own philosophy. To men, whose sincerity we consider as proved, we readily yield our belief, whenever they declare such things, as they have had opportunity certainly to know. God knows all things with absolute certainty. Ought he not, then, to be believed, in whatever he is pleased to declare? is not his veracity greater than that of men? *If*, then, *we receive the witness of men, the witness of God*, saith *St. John, is greater. He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar.* What wonderful irreverence is this towards God! What an impudent insult! How tremendous a profanation of his glorious character!

Fourthly; *Of the same nature is the Contempt, Obloquy, and Ridicule, often cast upon the Scriptures.* The Scriptures, in instances not very unfrequent, receive this treatment from those, who professedly believe them; and much more frequently from Infidels. A man, who has not, hitherto, seen sufficient evidence to prove the divine origin of the Scriptures, may be fairly considered as warranted to withhold from them his assent. At the same time, he is indispensably bound to investigate this evidence as fast, and as far, as he is able; and to yield himself to it, whenever it is perceived, with candour and equity. But nothing can justify, or even palliate, the manner, in which Infidels have conducted their opposition to this book. There is no mode of attack, which they have thought too gross to be adopted in this warfare. The frauds, which they have practised upon Christianity, have been without number, and without limits. All the weakness, folly, superstition, and enthusiasm, inherent in the nature of man, they have charged upon its doctrines; although these very doctrines contradict and condemn them all. All the vices, inwoven in the human character; all the enormities, perpetrated by the pride, injustice, and cruelty, of man; they have charged upon its precepts; notwithstanding these very precepts prohibit every one of them, and threaten them,

universally, with endless punishment. The Religion itself they have regularly styled Superstition, Enthusiasm, and Fanaticism; and have thus endeavoured to prepossess, and to a vast extent have actually prepossessed, great multitudes of mankind against it, under the mere influence of Nicknames. Where they could not convince, or refute; an evil which has universally attended their efforts; they have succeeded, at least equally well, by perplexing and entangling. Instead of open, direct arguments, fairly stated and fully discussed, they have insinuated doubts; started difficulties; and hinted objections; leaving the minds of the young, the ignorant, and the unskilful, to embarrass themselves by dwelling upon these subjects, which they had neither learning to investigate, nor capacity to understand. In this situation, such minds are as effectually overthrown, from a consciousness of their inability to defend themselves, as by the power of an acknowledged demonstration.

What they have been unable to effect in these modes, they have endeavoured to accomplish by wit. A book, professing to be the Word of God, to communicate his Will to mankind, and to disclose eternal life, and eternal death, to every human being, together with the terms, and means, by which one of these may be obtained; and the other must be suffered; a book believed truly to sustain this character by a great part of those, to whom it has been fairly published; particularly by most of the learned, and by almost all, whom their fellow-men have regarded as wise and virtuous; has unquestionable claims to be examined with solemn thought, and unbiassed investigation. The question concerning its divine Origin is of infinite moment to every child of *Adam*. He, who can sport with this subject, would with the same propriety laugh, while he heard the sentence of death pronounced upon him; and dance around the grave, which was dug to receive him. Suppose the Scriptures are in fact the Word of God: suppose the Infidel at the foot of Mount Sinai: suppose he heard the trumpet sound, and the thunders roll; saw the lightnings blaze, the cloud embosom the mountain, and the flame of devouring fire reach the heavens; and perceived the earth to tremble beneath his feet: suppose the final day arrived, and the same Infidel to hear the call of the Archangel, the trump of God, and the shout of the heavenly host; and to see the graves open, the dead arise, the Judge descend, the plains and the mountains kindled with the final conflagration, and the *heavens and the earth flee away*: would he be inclined to jesting, to sport, and to ridicule? The Scriptures declare themselves to be the Word of the glorious Being, who spoke from Sinai, and who will again come to Judge *the quick and the dead*. The very terms, by which the Infidel, and all his fellow-men, will be tried on this dreadful day, the Scriptures profess to unfold; the very terms, on which, to us, are suspended both heaven and hell. Should the Scriptures be indeed the Word of that God;

what will become of the Infidel? Should they not; what will he lose by believing them? Where, then, is the place for his sport? where the foundation for his trifling?

Could the contempt, or the ridicule, which he employs, really affect the question; and exhibit it in any new light to the understanding of man; something, at least, might be pleaded in extenuation of this conduct. But ridicule, however gross the banter, or refined the wit, cannot be proof. A sneer cannot be an argument. The question, after every effort of this nature, is left just where it was: while the inquirer is ensnared, deceived, and ruined. How melancholy an employment, to destroy a soul for the sake of uttering a jest!

To complete this wretched pursuit of this wretched purpose, the Infidel assaults the Scriptures with obscenity. In periods and places, in which coarse manners prevail; when the animal side of man is left naked; and the feelings and conduct of the brute obtrude themselves without a blush; this obscenity breaks out in gross ribaldry, and the shameless dialect of the workhouse and the brothel. In more chastened society, the impurity, lest it should be too offensive, is veiled by decency of expression; steals upon the mind in an innuendo; glances at it in a hint, and peeps from behind an obscure suggestion. What a shocking mixture is here presented to the thoughts of a sober, and even of a decent, man! Obscenity, blended with the truths, contained in the Word of God. How obviously must the mind, which can voluntarily, which can laboriously, unite these things, be *the habitation of devils; the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird!* How irreverent, how profane, *how abominable*, how *filthy*, must it appear to Him, *in whose sight the heavens are unclean!*

3dly. *This irreverence is, perhaps, not less exercised toward the Institutions, or Ordinances, of God.*

God has instituted, as important means of displaying his own character, preserving his worship, and promoting his religion, in the world, the Sabbath; public and private prayer and praise; the preaching of the Gospel; public and private humiliation and fasting; the Church of Christ; its communion; its sacraments; and its discipline. As all these are his Institutions; and seen to be his; it is obvious, that irreverence towards *them* is irreverence towards *himself;* and in this manner has the subject ever been considered in the Christian world. It will be easily seen, that the various ways, in which this numerous train of sacred things is profaned, are so many, as to render it impracticable to specify them on the present occasion. I shall, therefore, attempt only to mention such, as are most usual, or most prominent.

The Sabbath is undoubtedly the great support of Religion in the world; for wherever it is unknown or unregarded, Religion is unknown. Accordingly God has been pleased to make it the subject of one of the Commands of the Decalogue. This holy day is

profaned, and the Author of it treated with gross irreverence, whenever it is devoted to pleasure, or to secular business: whenever we ride, or walk, when neither necessity nor mercy demands: whenever we read books of amusement, and diversion; or devote our conversation to any topics, unsuited to the holy nature of this day. Nor is it less really profaned, when we spend its sacred hours in idleness, or sleep; or when, in any other manner, we refuse, or neglect, to employ them in the great duties of Religion. Equally, and more obviously, are we guilty of this profanation, when we speak of the Sabbath with contempt; and ridicule, or laugh at, others for regarding it with the reverence, enjoined in the Scriptures; decry the Institution, as useless; as injurious to the interests of mankind; and as deserving the regard of none, but weak and enthusiastic minds: or when, with direct hostility, we deny its sacred nature; labour to weaken its authority; and endeavour to destroy its holy, heavenly influence on mankind. In all these cases, we impeach the wisdom, equity, or goodness, of its Author; declare him, when instituting it, to have acted unworthily of himself; and, in plain language, cast contempt on *Him*, as well as on his *Institution*. No man ever thought of treating with contempt this holy day, considered merely as a seventh part of time; no man ever directed the shafts of ridicule at Monday. Aside from the fact, that it was instituted by God as a sacred day, the Sabbath would be no more despised, and regarded with no more hostility, than any other day of the week. The hostility and contempt, therefore, are directed against the Institution; against its sacred nature; against its holy and glorious Author.

The Worship of God is profaned, whenever, for reasons plainly insufficient, we refuse to be present in his house, upon the Sabbath; or, when present, neglect cordially to unite in its solemn services; or spend the time allotted to them in sleep or diversion; or when we sport with the services themselves; or when our minds rise in hostility against the faithful preaching of the Gospel; or when we make the worship of God an object of our scorn and ridicule. Nor are we less really guilty of this crime, whenever we allure or persuade others to the same conduct. The worship of God was designed to be the great means of leading us to eternal life. God appears in it as a forgiving God; as a God reconcileable to sinners; as redeeming them from under the curse of the law; and as re-instamping his own image on their minds. He, who will not come to meet Him, when appearing in this most venerable and endearing of all characters, or who, when he has come, will treat him with neglect, opposition, and contempt, is guilty of an insult on the Creator, at which the stoutest heart ought to tremble. What an account of this conduct must he expect to give at the final day!

The Christian Sacraments are not often openly profaned. The elements employed have, indeed, been touched with unhallowed hands; and the ordinances themselves have, in solitary instances,

been insulted by blasphemous mimicry. But the cases have been so rare, and have been regarded by those, who knew them, with such abhorrence; as scarcely to need any reprobation from me. I shall, therefore, only say, that according to the first feelings of the human mind, feelings, which seem never to have been materially weakened, unless by absolute profligacy, they are universally held in the most reverential estimation; and all disregard, thoughtlessness, and levity, are not only by the Scriptures, but by common sense also, proscribed in our attendance upon them. If we are not wonderfully insensible; we cannot fail of exercising a profound reverence, when in this peculiarly solemn and affecting manner we draw so near to a forgiving God.

Private and secret Worship is much more frequently the object of levity, and contempt. Family prayer, peculiarly, has been attacked, on all sides, by loose and light-minded men; and, I doubt not, has been hunted out of many a family, and prevented from entering many others, by the sneers of scorn, and the jests of derision. Why should not men pray? Why should not families pray? Are we not dependent creatures? Do we not need every thing at the hand of God? Who beside God, can supply our wants? Has he not required us to pray? If we do not pray, will he bless us? Has he not made *asking* the indispensable condition of *receiving?* The *man*, who will not pray, is a madman. The *family*, which will not pray, are lunatics.

God has required us to *pray always with all prayer;* and, therefore, to perform regularly the duties of both private and secret devotion. When we ourselves neglect either; or when we oppose the performance of them in our fellow-men; we neglect, or oppose, the command of Jehovah. He, who laughs and sneers at secret and family prayer, points his jests, his contempt, and his mockery, against his Creator. Where can folly, or frenzy, be found, more absolute than this? The wretch, who is guilty of it, is a helpless, sinful, miserable, creature; dependent for existence, for enjoyment, and for hope, on the mere, sovereign mercy of God; is promised all blessings, which he needs, if he will pray for them; and is assured, that, if he will not pray, he not only will be entitled to no blessings whatever, but that those, which he regards as blessings, and which, if he faithfully performed this duty, would prove such, will be converted into curses. This wretch not only refuses to pray himself, but with gross impiety, insults his Maker anew, by preventing his fellow-men from praying also.

I shall only add, that *Irreverence, the same in substance with that, which has been here specified*, may exist in *thought, and in action*, as well as *in words*. In some of the cases, which I have mentioned, it has been indeed supposed to terminate in thought. It may thus terminate in all cases, which do not involve our intercourse with our fellow-men. In this intercourse it may be exhibited in actions; and those of very various kinds. Of these a very few

have been mentioned. It is only necessary to observe, that, whenever our hearts teem with irreverent thoughts towards God, or towards any thing because it is his, it makes little difference, whether we express our impiety by the tongue, or by the hands. The irreverence is the same: the design is the same: the moral action is the same. It is the rising of pride, enmity, and rebellion, against God; the open, impudent contention of a creature against his Creator; the struggle, the swelling, the writhing, of a worm against Jehovah.

SERMON CIII.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.—THE GUILT OF PROFANENESS.

EXODUS xx. 7.—*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.*

IN the preceding discourse, I proposed, after making several introductory remarks, to examine,

I. *The Nature;*

II. *The Guilt;* and,

III. *The Danger; of the Sin, forbidden in this Command.*

The first of these I considered, at length, in that discourse. I shall now proceed to make some observations concerning the second; viz. *the Guilt of this sin.* The guilt of this sin is evident,

1st. *From the tenour of the Command.*

Profaneness is one of the eight great crimes, which God thought proper to make the express subjects of prohibition in the Decalogue. In the order, in which he was pleased to speak, and to write, them, it holds *the third place.* All the importance, which this wonderful Law derived from being uttered by the voice, and being written with the finger, of God; from his manifest appearance in this lower world; and from the awful splendour, and amazing majesty, with which he appeared; this precept, equally with the others, challenges to itself. In addition to these things, it is the only precept in the whole number, which annexes an express threatening to the crime, which is prohibited. From all these circumstances it is abundantly evident, that the Guilt of this sin is of no common dye in the sight of Jehovah. All these circumstances were intended to be significant, and are obviously significant, in a manner pre-eminently solemn and affecting. How should we ourselves feel, if the Creator of the Universe were to inform us by the mouth of an acknowledged prophet, that he would appear in this world on an appointed day, to publish his awful pleasure to mankind! With what anxious, trembling expectation should we wait for the destined period! With what solemnity and apprehension should we behold the day dawn! With what silent awe should we see the cloudy chariot descend; and hear the Archangel proclaim the approach of his Maker! How should we shudder at the sound of the trumpet, and the quaking of the earth! Would not our *hearts die within us*, when the thunders began to roll; the lightnings to blaze; and *the flames of devouring fire* to rise up to the heavens? In the midst of these tremendous scenes, with what si-

lent, death-like amazement should we listen, to hear the voice of the Almighty! Would it not seem wonderful; would it not appear delirious; for any man to call in question the authority of his commands, or the absolute rectitude of his pleasure; to refuse the duties, which he enjoined, or to perpetrate the crimes, which he forbade? Who, after hearing from the mouth of God the awful prohibition, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;* and the fearful threatening, annexed to it, *for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, who taketh his name in vain;* would not quake with terror at the very thought of committing a sin, thus alarmingly forbidden? Who would demand an argument to convince him, that such a sin was eminently evil in the sight of his Maker?

2dly. *This sin is an Immediate Attack on God himself, and is, therefore, peculiarly guilty.*

The hostilities of mankind against any Intelligent being may be carried on *mediately*, or *immediately: Mediately*, against his *property*, if he be a human being, or against *his other external interests: Immediately*, against his *character, and person.* In the same manner we may attack our Maker by attacking our fellow-creatures; and violating such commands of his, as regulate our duties to *them;* appropriately, and usually, styled *the duties of Morality.* Or we may attack him, immediately, by violating those commands which respect his person and character, and enjoin the various duties of piety. All the transgressions, which I have recited, are directed against objects, confessedly belonging to God, and known to be *his*, in immediate possession: his Names, his Titles, his Works, his Word, and his Institutions. As *his* only, do they become the objects of irreverence at all. In all these cases, therefore, as here described, we attack God in the most direct manner, which is in our power. A king or a parent, may be insulted by an affront, offered immediately to his officer; his messenger; or any other, acting under his authority. No person will deny the affront, here, to be real; nor, as the case may be, to be very serious. Still it was probably never questioned, that, when this same affront was offered directly to the parent, or the king, himself, it became far more gross; an insult of greater magnitude, and greater guilt. Accordingly, such affronts have been always more seriously resented, and more severely punished.

In all the cases, mentioned in the preceding discourse, God is necessarily, and most solemnly, present to the mind of man. Whatever impiety, therefore, whatever irreverence, whatever profaneness, is exhibited in these cases, is directed immediately against him; against his character; against his person. He, who is the subject of it, *stretcheth out his hand against God; and strengthenth himself against the Almighty. He runneth on him, even on his neck; upon the thick bosses of his buckler.* How can the man who is summoned to take a solemn oath, who is employed in the eminently solemn duty of prayer, or in the pre-eminently solemn duty

of dedicating himself to God in the covenant of peace, fail to have a lively and affecting sense of the presence of his Maker? How can he fail to realize, that all the levity, thoughtlessness, insincerity, and irreverence, of which he is guilty, is levelled directly against God? Who else is, who else can be, the object of this conduct? Who else is concerned with it? Whose name is here mocked? Whose institutions are set at nought? If the criminal be weak enough to suspect that he is not, in this case, trifling with his Maker; and wickedly profaning his glorious name; he is probably the only being in the universe, sufficiently bewildered to adopt this unsound and unhappy opinion.

What is true of these acts of worship, is true with little variation of every other.

In that light-minded use of the names and titles of God, which is appropriately called profaneness, the circumstances are, I acknowledge, in some respects materially different. It seems wonderful indeed, that, whenever the name of God is mentioned, any mind should not be filled with awe, and affectingly realize the presence of this majestic Being. The *Jews* would not pronounce the incommunicable name JEHOVAH except in one peculiarly solemn act of religious worship. Such of the *Mohammedans*, as cannot read, carefully lay aside any written, or printed paper, because they know not, but it may have upon it the name of God. But in this, and in every other, Christian country, there is reason to fear, that multitudes, and, probably, that most or all those, who are habitually profane, use *this glorious and fearful name* without even a thought that God is present to hear them.

In his own proper character of the *glorious and eternal Jehovah, who hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and whose kingdom ruleth over all*, it is impossible to regard him with serious, or with even sober thought, and not be filled with profound and reverential awe. It is impossible to realize who, and what, and where HE is, and not be filled with fear and trembling. He called into being the heavens and the earth; *upholds them by the word of his power;* rules them with an irresistible hand; gives life, and death, to whomsoever he pleases; is present wherever we are; looks with an intuitive survey into the secret chambers of the soul; records all our thoughts, words, and actions, in the book of his remembrance; and will bring them before our eyes at the final day. On his bounty and forbearance we live. When he gives, we receive. When he withholds, we die. His smile makes heaven: his frown creates hell. Those, who fear, and love, and serve him, he will bless: those, who rebel against him, he will destroy. Who then, unless lost to sense and decency, will not *tremble at his presence*, and lie low in the dust before him?

But in this deplorable transgression, the profane swearer brings God into his thoughts, (if he think at all) and into his conversation, with a character altogether familiar, and with considerations, and

views, of the most debasing vulgarity. The same man, when in the presence of his fellow-men, acknowledged by him to be of respectable characters, would set a guard on his conduct; particularly on his tongue; and would speak of them, and to them, and before them, with sobriety, care, and decorum; and would watchfully give them every reasonable proof, that he regarded them, only with respect. From this decency in civilized life, a departure can scarcely be found; unless under the influence of strong passion, or pressing interest.

Surely the Creator of all things has as powerful claims to veneration, as the worm, which he has made. But notwithstanding his glorious and awful character, notwithstanding we know that he is present to all our conduct; notwithstanding we know that he hears whatever we say, and sees whatever we think, or do; we make this great and terrible Being the subject of the most irreverential, impudent thoughts, and of the most vulgar, affrontive, contemptuous language. Nay, all this is done by the profane person, for no purpose, but to affront and insult him; and to induce others to affront and insult him also.

All this is done, not once, twice, or in a few solitary instances only; not in the season of forgetfulness, the unguarded hour of passion, or the moment of peculiar temptation, merely; but every day, in every place, and on every familiar occasion. In *this* manner, God is *habitually* brought up to view, and *continually* insulted. Thus familiarized, thus habituated, to such thoughts, and to such language, the profane person soon becomes unable to think, or speak concerning his Maker in any other manner. All his thoughts concerning him become a regular *course* of irreverence: and all his language, a tissue of impudence and insult. God, the grea and terrible God, *in whose hand his breath is; in whom he lives and moves, and has his being;* the God, by whom he is soon to be judged, and rewarded with endless life, or endless death; becomes speedily, to him, a mere object of vulgar abuse and gross derision. With what views must this awful Being regard the miserable wretch, who thus degrades his character! What must be the appearance of this wretch at the final day!

From God, the source, and substance, of every thing sacred, the transition to all other sacred things is easy; and, in a sense, instinctive. From him Religion derives its existence, its obligation, its power, its hopes, and its rewards. Separated from him, there can be no piety. Separated from him, there can be no morality. Who does not see, that without God there could be no Bible, no Sabbath, no worship, no holiness, and no heaven. He, therefore, who is accustomed to profane the name of God, cuts off his connexion with all things serious and sacred. But nothing else is, comparatively, of any use to man. Whatever is gay and amusing, and at the same time innocent, and in some sense useful, is useful only to refresh the mind for a more vigorous application to things

of a serious and sacred nature. In these, lie all the real and substantial interests of man; the foundation of a virtuous, useful, and happy life, and a glorious immortality. To lose our connexion with them, therefore, is to lose our all. Of course, the profane person voluntarily squanders the blessings of time and eternity; and with a portentous prodigality makes himself *poor, and wretched, and miserable;* a nuisance to the world, and an outcast from heaven.

3dly. *Profaneness is, in most instances, a violation of peculiarly clear, and peculiarly solemn, inducements to our duty.*

I have already remarked, under the preceding head, that, in many of the cases, specified in the former discourse, it is impossible that the presence and character of God should not be realized by the profane person. But the character and presence of God, united, present to every mind, not wholly destitute of sobriety, a combination of the most solemn and powerful motives to the performance of its duty. The Being, by whom we were created, and on whom we depend for life, together with all its blessings and hopes, who *will bring every work, with every secret thing, into judgment*, and *who will reward every man according to the deeds, done in the body*, with a retribution final and endless, is an object so awful, so interesting, so overwhelming, that one would naturally think no sacrifice too great, no duty too difficult or discouraging, if the performance would secure his favour.

To the considerations which have been here mentioned, others of singular importance are always to be added, when we are examining almost all the cases of profaneness, specified in the preceding discourse. In the *Word and Institutions of God*, and in all the *Religious services, rendered to him according to the dictates of the Gospel*, he is presented to us as the Father, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier, of mankind, in the most endearing and venerable of all offices, the offices of accomplishing an expiation for sin, renewing the soul, pardoning its transgressions, and entitling it again to the blessings of infinite love. These blessings, literally infinite, flowing only from the sovereign and boundless mercy of Jehovah, are proffered to a mind apostatized, rebellious, and ruined; a mind incapable of renewing itself, and, therefore, if left to itself, hopeless of the divine favour; and an outcast from the virtuous and happy universe. In such a situation, how deeply should we naturally suppose it must be affected with a sense of the infinite goodness, engaged so wonderfully in its behalf; by the glorious blessings, proffered to its acceptance; and by its own infinite need of a share in these blessings. If it will not be influenced by the presence of Jehovah, appearing in these amiable and wonderful characters; if it will not be moved by the proffer of these invaluable and immortal blessings; what inducements can persuade it to perform its duty? If the pleasure of such a God, if the attainment of such a salvation, will not lay hold on the heart;

where shall we look for motives of sufficient weight to engage its obedience?

But the profane person does not merely *disobey*; as we commonly understand this term: *He disobeys in the most provoking manner.* He treats his Maker as the Jews treated Christ. They did not merely reject this divine Saviour. They did not merely crucify him. They rejected him with scorn: they crucified him with insult. Thorns they gave him for a crown; and a reed for a sceptre. The respect, which they professedly paid him, was contempt: and the homage, mockery. Such, for substance, is the manner in which the profane person treats his God. With all the solemn inducements, which have been mentioned, before his eyes, he not only rejects this glorious Being, and his benevolent offers of eternal life to perishing sinners; but accompanies his rejection with irreverence, despite, and insolence; and cries, Who is the Almighty, that I should serve him? If the *ways* of God were not *higher than our ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth;* what would become of this audacious, miserable being?

4thly. *Profaneness is a sin, to which there is scarcely any temptation.*

In the commission of most sins, mankind usually expect, and believe, they shall obtain some natural good: and this is almost always the prime object of their sinful pursuit: good, forbidden, indeed, and therefore unlawful; yet still really good in the apprehension of the sinner. Thus persons commonly lie, and cheat, for the sake of some gain; become intoxicated, on account of the pleasure experienced in the use of strong drink; are gluttons, to enjoy the delightful taste of dainty food: and thus in almost all other cases of transgression.

But in profaneness there seems to be no good, either enjoyed, or expected, beside that, which is found in the mere love, and indulgence of sin. No person ever acquired property, health, reputation, place, power, nor, it would seem, pleasure, from profaneness. Those particular movements of the tongue, which articulate profaneness, produce, so far as I am able to conjecture, no more agreeable sensations, than any other. The words, which embody profane thoughts, are neither smoother, nor sweeter, than any other words. If, then, profaneness were not sinful; such words would be pronounced no oftener than any other. The pleasure, found in profaneness, such as it is, is therefore found, chiefly if not wholly, in the wickedness, which it involves, and expresses. The *sin* is the good; and not any thing peculiar to the manner, in which it is committed; nor any thing, which the profaneness is expected to be the means of acquiring. It may be said, that the profane person recommends himself to his companions; persons, with whom he is pleased, and whom he wishes to please; and that, at the same time, he secures himself from their contempt and

ridicule; to which otherwise he would be exposed. This, without doubt, is partially true; and comes nearer than any thing else, which can be alleged, to a seeming exception to the justice of the remark under consideration. Yet it is hardly a seeming exception. Nothing but *the wickedness of this conduct*, recommends the profane person to his companions: and those, to whom he is recommended, are sinners only. But for the love of wickedness in *them*, he could not become agreeable to them by this evil practice: and, but for the love of wickedness in *him*, he could not wish to be thus agreeable. Can it then be good; can it be gainful; will it be alleged to be gain; to recommend ourselves to *sinners* by the perpetration of *sin?* Is not the end, which we propose; are not the means, which we use; altogether disgraceful both to ourselves and them? Instead of being beneficial to either, are they not the means of corruption, and ruin, to both? Is the favour of men, who love sin; and so ardently love it, as to love us merely for sinning; desirable, or useful, to us? Is it worth our labour? Does it deserve our wishes? Can it prove a balance for the guilt, which we incur? Can it be of any value to us, although in desiring and obtaining it we were to incur no guilt?

But the profane person *is not esteemed*, even by his sinful companions. They may desire him as an associate; and they may relish his wickedness; but they approve of neither. Such persons have repeatedly declared to me, that they approved neither of themselves, nor others, when guilty of this sin; but regarded it as a stain upon the character of both. The companions of such a man may be pleased with *him*, and *his wickedness;* because both may contribute to keep them in countenance; or make them diversion. They may wish to see him as bad, or worse, than themselves; that the deep hues of their own guilt may fade at his side. Still, they will make him, when he is not present, an object of their contempt and derision. In the same manner, men love treason, and treachery; and in this manner, also, despise the traitor. If the profane person will take pains to learn the real opinion of his companions; he will find, that they invariably condemn his character on the one hand, and on the other, hold it in contempt. In the mean time, he exposes himself uniformly to the abhorrence of virtuous, and even of sober, men. Of this no proof is necessary. The experience of every day informs us, that profane persons are a kind of *Helots* in society: men, whom youth are admonished to dread, and avoid: men, pointed out to children as warnings against iniquity; branded as nuisances to society; and marked as blots upon the creation of God.

Virtue is acknowledged to be distinguished, and excellent, in some general proportion, at least, to the *disinterestedness*, with which it is exercised. Sin, committed without motives of such magnitude as to be properly styled temptations, may be justly termed *disinterested sin:* sin, committed only from the love of sin,

and not with a view to any natural good, in which it is to terminate. This must undoubtedly be acknowledged to be wickedness of a dye peculiarly deep, of a nature eminently guilty; and the author of it must, with as little doubt, be eminently vile, odious, and abominable, in the sight of God.

5thly. *Profaneness is among the most distinguished means of corrupting our fellow-men.*

This observation I intend to apply exclusively to the profaneness of the tongue. It is indeed applicable, with much force, to profaneness, manifested in various kinds of action; but it is peculiarly applicable to the kind of profaneness, which I have particularly specified.

Sins of the tongue are all social sins; necessarily social, and eminently social. They are practised, only where men are present to hear, and to witness; and they are practised, wherever men are present to hear. Thus a man is profane before his family; swears, and curses, and ridicules sacred things, in the social club; in the street; before his neighbours; and in the midst of a multitude. Persons of all ages become witnesses, and learners. Thus children learn to lisp the curse; and the grey-haired sinner, to mutter the faltering oath.

No man was ever profane alone; in a wilderness, or in his closet. To the very nature of this sin, the presence of others seems so indispensable, that we cannot realize the commission of it by any man, unless in the midst of society. All the mischief of evil example is found in the social nature of man; and in the social nature of those sins, to which the whole power of evil example is confined. Where sin is in its nature solitary, and the perpetration of course insulated; whatever other guilt it may involve, the sinner plainly cannot be charged with the guilt of corrupting others. In order to follow *us* in wickedness, *others* must know, that we are wicked. When they hear of our wickedness at a distance; they are always, perhaps, in greater or less danger of being corrupted; because sympathy is always a powerful propensity of the mind, and because we have always a strong tendency to imitation. But when they are present to see sin in our actions, and to hear it from our tongues; it becomes the means of the most certain and efficacious corruption; because then the impression is ordinarily the strongest possible.

There is, however, one case, in which this corruption, though usually less efficacious in particular instances, is yet much more dreadfully operative, because it is much more extensively diffused. An author, when possessed of sufficient ingenuity, can spread this malignant influence wherever his writings can penetrate; and expand the force of an evil example over many countries, and through a long succession of ages. Millions of the human race may owe to such a man the commencement, and progress, of iniquity in their minds; and may imbibe pernicious sentiments, which, but

for him, they would have never known, or would have regarded only with abhorrence. In this respect, what will Infidels, especially those of distinguished talents, have to answer for at the final day?

But this evil may be very widely diffused without the aid of the press, or the circulation of volumes. The tongue is an instrument more than sufficiently adapted to this unhappy end. One profane person makes multitudes; corrupts his professed friends, his daily companions, his near relations, and all with whom he corresponds, so far as they are capable of being corrupted. They again corrupt others: and they, in their turn, spread the contagion through successive circles of mankind, increasing continually in their numbers, and their expansion. Thus a profane inhabitant of this land may extend the mischiefs of his evil example to other countries, and to future ages: and a profane student of this seminary, may, and probably will, be the cause of handing down profaneness to students yet unborn.

The mischiefs of evil example are always great: in the present case they are dreadful. The tongue is obviously the prime instrument of human corruption; of diffusing, and perpetuating sin; of preventing the eternal life of our fellow-men; of extending perdition over the earth; and of populating the world of misery. *Behold*, saith *St. James*, *how great a matter* (in the original, *how great a forest*) *a little fire kindleth!* Small at first to the eye, it catches all the combustible materials within its reach, and spreading its ravages wider and wider, consumes, in the end, every thing before it with an universal conflagration. Among all the evil examples, which I have heard mentioned, or which have been alluded to within my knowledge, I do not remember, that a dumb man was ever named as one. No person, within my recollection, ever attributed his own sins to the example of such a man. Speaking men are the corrupters of their fellow-men: and they corrupt, pre-eminently, by their speech. No individual ever began to swear profanely by himself: and few, very few, ever commenced the practice, but from imitation. Like certain diseases of the human body, profaneness descends from person to person; and, like the plague, is regularly caught by infection. Let every profane person, then, solemnly remember how much evil will be charged to him in the great day of account: how many miserable wretches will date their peculiar sinfulness of character, and a vast multitude of their actual transgressions, from the power of his example: how many of his fellow-creatures he will contribute to plunge into eternal perdition: and how dreadfully, as well as justly, all these may wreak their insatiable vengeance on his head, for producing their final ruin: while he will be stripped of every excuse; and be forced by an angry conscience to say, Amen. Let him remember, that in this respect, if not in many others, he is a pest to human society, and *a smoke in* the *nostrils* of his Maker. Finally;

let him summon this character, and this guilt, before his eyes, whenever he repeats his profaneness, with a full conviction that, however he may flatter himself, all around him, as a vast and upright jury, sit daily on the trial of his crimes, and with an unanimous and honest verdict pronounce him guilty.

6tnly. *Profaneness prevents, or destroys, all Reverence towards God; together with all those religious exercises, and their happy consequences, of which it is the source.*

In the discourse, which I formerly delivered on this pre-eminently important religious attribute, I showed by a numerous train of Scriptural passages, that *it is peculiarly the means of rendering our worship acceptable to God; of exciting, and keeping alive, an abhorrence of sin; the great source of reformation; eminently the source of rectitude in our dispositions and conduct towards mankind; the foundation of peculiar blessings in the present world; and eminently the means of securing eternal life in the world to come.* These blessings, as an aggregate, are infinitely necessary, and infinitely valuable, to every human being. To prevent them, or to destroy them, that is, to prevent ourselves, or others, from becoming the subjects of them, is an evil, to which no limits can be assigned. But this dreadful work is effectually accomplished by profaneness. Profaneness itself is nothing but a high degree of irreverence to God. But no words are necessary to prove, that reverence and irreverence cannot exist together in the same mind; or that, where reverence does not exist, its happy effects cannot be found.

It is plainly impossible, that he, who indulges a spirit of profaneness, should ever worship God in an acceptable manner. This spirit, once indulged, soon becomes habitual; and will be present, and predominate, at all times, and on all occasions. It will accompany him to the house of God; and, if we could suppose such a man to attend private or secret devotion, would mingle itself with his family prayers, and, entering with him into his closet, would there insult his Maker to his face. But the truth is; he will neither pray in his family, nor in his closet. These exercises of piety he will only ridicule; and regard those, who scrupulously perform them, as the pitiful slaves of fear, voluntarily shackled by the chains of superstition. To the sanctuary, he may, at times, go, from curiosity, a regard to reputation, and a remaining sense of decency. There, however, all his seeming devotion will be merely external; an offering *of the blind and the lame; a sacrifice of swine's flesh; an abomination which God cannot away with;* a dead form, a corpse without a soul; without life; corrupted; putrid; sending forth *a savour of death unto death.*

Instead of exciting, and keeping alive, an abhorrence of sin in his mind, the profane person, by the very irreverence which he cherishes, excites, and keeps alive all his other tendencies to

iniquity. God, the only object of obedience, imperfectly obeyed by the best mind which ever inhabited this sinful world, soon becomes to him by this very disposition familiar, insignificant and despised. Who would obey a Being, regarded in this manner? What anxiety can be occasioned by the thought of disobeying him? Who can be solicitous concerning the evil of sin, when such is in his view the object, against which sin is to be committed? Which of us could be at all apprehensive of either the guilt, or the danger, of sinning against a Being, whom we regarded only with contempt.

The reformation of a profane person is out of the question. His progress is only downward. Profaneness is the mere floodgate of iniquity; and the stream, once let out, flows with a current, daily becoming more and more rapid and powerful. There is no crime, to which profaneness does not lend efficacious and malignant aid. It is the very nurse of sin; the foster parent of rebellion, ingratitude, and impiety.

The unjust judge, who feared not God, regarded not man. Such will be the conduct, whenever temptation invites, of all who do not fear God. Persons of this description may, I acknowledge, have, originally, the same natural affections with other men. But even these, so far as they are of any real use to others, will, if I have observed the conduct of mankind with success, be gradually worn away by the spirit of irreverence: and, while they last, will fail of producing their most proper and valuable effects. A profane person cannot long pray with his family. He cannot teach his children their duty. He cannot reprove them for sin. He cannot set them an example of piety. He cannot exhort them to seek salvation. He cannot take them by the hand, and lead them to heaven.

What blessings can he expect from the hand of God in the present world? He may, indeed, be rich. Oft, says the poet,

> "Oft on the vilest, riches are bestowed,
> To show their meanness in the sight of God."

Should he be rich; his wealth will be a curse, and not a blessing; the means, merely, of increasing his pride, of hardening his heart, and of inclining him to *treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* He may on account of his talents, his heroism, or some other cause, be held in estimation among his fellow-men. But whatever reputation he may acquire in this manner; this, like his wealth, will prove only a curse to him: for, although *highly esteemed among men*, he will be *an abomination in the sight of God.*

Beyond the grave he can expect, and can receive, nothing but *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.* His profaneness

is an unceasing and fearful provocation of his Maker, and a terrible preparation for a future life of eternal blasphemy. All the ruin of futurity, and all the guilt and wretchedness of this life, he voluntarily brings upon himself by the indulgence of this odious, senseless, causeless sin; and thus quietly, and coolly, prepares himself to be destroyed for ever. *In sinning against God*, in this manner, *he* eminently *wrongs his own soul;* and *loves*, invites, and solicits, everlasting *death.*

SERMON CIV.

THE LAW OF GOD.—THE DECALOGUE.—THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.—THE DANGER OF PROFANENESS.

EXODUS xx. 7.—*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.*

IN the two preceding discourses, I considered, at length, *the Nature, and the Guilt, of Profaneness*. I shall now proceed, according to the plan originally proposed, to examine with some attention *the Danger* of this sin.

All sin is dangerous. But there are different kinds, and degrees, of danger in different sins. On those, which especially attend this sin, or which, though common to other sinful habits, are connected with profaneness in a remarkable manner, I mean to insist in the following discourse.

1st. *Profaneness is eminently the Source of Corruption to the whole Character.*

That there is an intimate connection between the thoughts, and the tongue, is perfectly well known to all men of consideration. The nature of this connection is, however, misapprehended, if I mistake not, by most men. All persons perceive, that their thoughts give birth to their words: while few seem to be aware, that their words, to a vast extent, originate, and modify, their thoughts. Almost all moral attributes, and employments, operate mutually as causes and effects. Thus irreverence of thought generates profaneness of expression; and profaneness of expression, in its turn, generates and enhances irreverence of thoughts. Thus, universally, the mind moves the tongue; and the tongue again, in its turn, moves the mind.

The person, who speaks evil, will always think evil. By this I do not mean, that evil *thoughts* must precede evil *speaking*: and that the man must, therefore, have been the subject of evil thoughts, in order to have spoken evil. I mean, that evil speaking, although an effect of evil thoughts, is, in its turn, a cause of new, and other, evil thoughts. He, who thinks ill, will undoubtedly speak, and act, ill. This all men readily acknowledge. It is equally certain, although not equally well understood, that evil speech, and evil actions, directly corrupt the mind; and render it more sinful, than it would ever become, if it were not to speak, and act, in this manner.

A familiar example, or two, will advantageously illustrate this subject. An angry man becomes at once more violent and wrathful, when he begins to vent his passion by words. What before was anger, soon becomes fury. Before, he was able to retain his spirit within some bounds of decency; but as soon as his tongue is let loose, his countenance will be distorted, his eyes flash, and his sentiments be the mere effusions of frenzy. A revengeful man kindles, like a furnace, from the moment, in which he begins to execute his revenge. What before was the revenge of a human heart, is speedily changed into the fell malignity of a fiend.

St. James has exhibited this tendency of the tongue to corrupt the mind, in language remarkable, exact, and forcible. He styles it *an unruly member; a fire: a world of iniquity;* and declares, that *it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature.* Its influence on the mind itself, as well as on the affairs of mankind, he describes in this strong exclamation: *Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!* That the eye of *St. James* was directed to *the profaneness* of the tongue is obvious from what he says in the two succeeding verses. *Therewith bless we God; and therewith curse we men. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing.* Cursing, one dreadful kind of profaneness, was, according to his own account, in the eye of the Apostle, a kind of profaneness, mingled always with every other, and inseparable from every other. In this very sense, then, *the tongue is full of deadly poison; a fire that kindles the whole course of nature,* in the soul; and *defiles the whole body,* and the whole mind.

Of the correctness of these Apostolic declarations, experience furnishes ample proof. Among all the multitude of persons, who have borne the character of profaneness, not one was ever believed, on account of his other conduct, by any competent judge, acquainted with him, to be a virtuous man. Many persons have begun to be profane from mere inconsideration; and, at the commencement of their career, were no more depraved, than such of their companions as abstained from this sin. In their progress, however, they became corrupted much more extensively within the same period; increased generally in wickedness, and particularly in hardness of heart; and lost every serious and even sober thought: all that course of thought, whence moral good might be derived, or whence might spring any hopeful efforts towards salvation. This is a case, which must, I think, have frequently met the eye of every man, who is seriously attentive to the moral conduct of his fellow-men; and strongly shows, that the practice has, itself, deplorably corrupted them in other respects, and set on fire the whole course of nature in their minds and lives. Hence, instead of being accounted virtuous on account of any thing in their other conduct, persons, addicted to this sin, have been regarded by common sense as gross sinners of course. "*A profane person,*" is,

therefore, as you well know, proverbial language, used regularly to denote a wicked vicious wretch.

The truth plainly is, and all men discern it to be truth, that irreverence to God is a general source of wickedness. As I remarked in a former discourse, *Religious Reverence is the direct, and peculiar, source of reformation.* Irreverence, its opposite, is in the same manner the direct source of degeneracy. This is indeed true of most sins, when *habitually* and *allowedly* practised. He, who practises one sin in this manner, will almost necessarily relish other sins more. As the body when corrupted, and weakened, by sickness, is more prepared for the admission of any disease which may arrest it; so the soul, corrupted by sin of any kind, becomes more fitted for the admission of every kind of wickedness, which seeks admission. The conscience becomes less tender, less awake, less alarmed at the apprehension of guilt. The motives also, which should induce us to abstain from iniquity, gradually lose their power. The love of sinning, the evil passions and appetites, gain strength by indulgence; and temptation, having repeatedly vanquished us, more easily vanquishes us again.

But irreverence, more than almost any other evil, brings us into this danger. Whenever God becomes an object of little importance, or estimation, in our view; the *evil* of sinning vanishes of course. The *danger*, also, speedily recedes from our view. The only great and solemn Object in the universe, the only Being, who is of ultimate importance to us, loses all his awfulness and sanctity. The great and commanding motive is, therefore, gone; and there is nothing left, to restrain us, but reputation or convenience. In this situation, the mind is prepared for future perpetrations, not only by an increased love to sinning, but by a strong and habitual *feeling*, operating with much more power than mere *conviction*, that sin is neither guilty nor dangerous; or at the worst as a thing of small moment. The soul is thus left free to the indulgence of its evil propensities; and the restraints which once operated with no small efficacy, lose their hold on the mind.

An affecting exemplification of this doctrine is seen in the tendency of one exercise of profaneness to produce another. Persons addicted to profane swearing are, I apprehend, much more prone than most others, to the commission of perjury. An oath is an eminently solemn act of religious worship. The person, who takes an oath, calls God to witness the manner, in which he shall speak, or act, under the obligation which it imposes. If he shall speak truth, and nothing else; if he shall act faithfully in the office, or trust, which he is then assuming; he implores God, to bless him here and hereafter. If he shall speak falsely, or act unfaithfully; he in the same solemn manner invokes on his head the divine vengeance through time and eternity

Now it is plain beyond a doubt, that the solemn and awful character of God constitutes all the solemnity of an oath. If he is considered by the person, who takes it, as holy and sin-hating, as the unchangeable Enemy of faithlessness and falsehood; if he is realized as a present and awful Witness both of the oath and the subsequent conduct; if he is believed to be the future and dreadful Avenger of perjury and unfaithfulness; then we cannot but suppose, that the person, who has thus sworn, will deeply feel his obligation to be sincere, and faithful; will with deep anxiety speak the truth exactly, or discharge the duties of the assumed office in the fear of God.

But if, on the contrary, the juror, whether in evidence or in office, regards God as an object of little importance; as being either too weak, or too regardless of rectitude, to take any serious concern in the moral conduct of his creatures; as destitute of sacredness of character, and hatred of sin; as indifferent to truth and falsehood, faithfulness and treachery; as willing to be mocked with impunity, and abused without resentment; as existing, only to be a mere caterer to the wants and wishes of his creatures, and a mere object of profanation and contempt: then, plainly, the oath, in which he is invoked, can have little solemnity in the eyes, little influence on the heart, and little efficacy upon the conduct of the juror. To every such person it will become a thing of course; a mere wind-and-weather incident, an empty mockery of solemn sounds on a thoughtless tongue. Its obligation he will neither feel, nor see. The duties, which it requires, he will not perform. There will, therefore, be no difference of conduct, in this case, *between him that sweareth*, and *him that sweareth not*.

But how evident is it, that persons, who swear profanely, speedily lose all sense of the awful character of the Creator. From trifling with him in this wonderful manner, they soon learn to consider him as a mere trifler. From insulting him daily, they soon regard him as a proper object of insult. From mocking him with such impious effrontery, they speedily think of him in scarcely any other character, than that of a mere butt of mockery. Thus God is first degraded, in the view of the mind, by its own profaneness, and then intruded upon by perjury. He, who swears profanely, will, in ordinary cases, soon swear falsely. Accordingly, custom-house oaths, proverbially false, are usually taken by profane men. Nay, such men have by their own perjuries rendered these oaths proverbially false. Oaths in evidence, also, taken by such men, are justly regarded as lying under a general imputation; as contributing not a little to unhinge the confidence of mankind in this their last reliance for truth and safety.

What is true of *profane cursing and swearing*, as to its corrupting power, is true of *irreverence in every form*. Disregard to God is the flood-gate to all moral evil. He, who enters upon this conduct, ought to consider himself as then entering upon an univer-

sal course of iniquity; and as then yielding himself, as a slave, to do the whole drudgery of Satan.

2dly. *Profaneness is a sin, which is rapidly progressive.*

This truth cannot but be discerned, extensively, in the observations already made. Every act of profaning the name, perfections, works, word, and worship, of God, is obviously a bold, presumptuous attack upon this glorious Being. The sinner, having once dared so far, becomes easily more daring; and passes rapidly from one state of wickedness to another, until he becomes finally hardened in rebellion against his Maker. That most necessary fear of God, which is the great restraint upon sinful men, is speedily lost. The sinner is then left without a check upon his wickedness; and voluntarily induces upon himself a flinty obstinacy, which is a kind of reprobation on this side of the grave.

At the same time, the tongue is a most convenient instrument of iniquity, always ready for easy use. We cannot always sin with the hands; and are not always sufficiently gratified by mere sins of thought. Much as it is to be lamented, there is no small source of pleasure, found by wicked men in communicating their sinful thoughts and feelings to each other. The slanderer is never satisfied with merely thinking over slander. The liar would soon be discouraged if he could not utter his lies. The profane swearer could hardly fail of becoming a reformed man, were it not for the pleasure, little as it is, which he finds in uttering his profaneness to others. The sins of the tongue are perpetrated, alike, with ease, and delight, every day; and in every place, where even a solitary individual can be found to listen. Hence transgressions of this kind are multiplied wonderfully. The thief steals, and the cheat defrauds, occasionally only. But the slanderer will slander every day. The liar utters falsehood unceasingly. The profane person swears and curses every where; and multiplies his iniquities *as the drops of the morning*. From the mind of such a person it is reasonably believed, that the Spirit of that God *who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, will in a peculiar manner withdraw his influence. Can it be rationally supposed, that this celestial Visitant will stay with man, to be a witness of irreverence and profanation? Ought not every profane person to feel, that he is forcing away from himself those benevolent restraints upon his wickedness, which constitutes his only security, and the only rational foundation of his hopes of eternal life?

3dly. *Profaneness, particularly that of the tongue, naturally introduces men to evil companions, and shuts them out from the enjoyment of those who are virtuous.*

All men love, all men seek, companions, of their own character. Sinners herd with sinners instinctively. Virtuous men seek the company of those who are virtuous. Men of learning consort with men of learning; philosophers with philosophers; merchants, farmers, mechanics, and seamen, seek the company of those of

their own class: the mere, incidental circumstances of pursuing the same kind of business alluring them, regularly, to the society of each other. Still more powerful are moral inducements. This is a fact so extensively observed, that mankind have proverbially remarked, that *a man is known by the company which he keeps.*

Profane persons are shut out from the company of virtuous men by a variety of considerations. They totally disrelish the character of virtuous men: their pursuits; their sentiments; their conversation; and usually shun their society on this account. They also dread their inspection; and fear to have them witnesses of their own character, language, and opinions. For this reason, whenever they are in their company, they feel obliged to guard themselves; to bridle their tongues; and to take care, that their language and sentiments be not offensive to their companions, and dishonourable to themselves. This restraint, like all others, is painful; and they are unwilling to subject themselves to it, whenever it can be avoided.

Virtue, also, is in its own nature awful to all sinners: and proud as they are of themselves, and their sins, they cannot fail, in the hour of sober consideration, to feel their inferiority; and accordingly to be humbled, mortified, and abashed. Christ informs us that *he who doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.* For the very same reason, profane persons, and other sinners, hate the company of religious men; because their character and conduct are a direct contrast to their own, and hold them out in a stronger light of unworthiness and debasement. This contrast, few wicked men are willing to bear. Almost all of them shrink from it, as a wounded patient shrinks from the probe of the surgeon.

At the same time, virtuous persons loath, of course, the company, and conversation, of all open and obstinate sinners. But profane persons are among the most open of all sinners. Their sin is ever on their lips, and continually proclaimed by their tongues. It is impossible therefore, that their characters should not be known. Persons, so directly opposed in feelings and pursuits, can never unite with that mutual agreement of heart, or conversation, which is indispensable to the pleasantness, and even to the continuance, of familiar society. The virtuous man will, at the same time, find every thing lacking in such persons which he seeks for in company; whether it be pleasure, or profit.

In addition to these things, his reputation becomes stained, and very deeply, if he consorts, voluntarily, with such companions. "Why," it will naturally be asked, "does he frequent such company?" "Certainly," it will be answered, "not for profit." The necessary inference is, therefore, that he frequents it for the sake of pleasure. Of course, he must find pleasure in sin; and in this peculiarly odious sin. But to find pleasure in any sin is a direct contradiction of his religious profession; a direct denial of his

Christian character. In this manner, then, he wounds himself; he wounds the church; he wounds the cause of God. What Christian can be supposed to make such a sacrifice, for the sake of any thing which he can gain from sinful companions?

But the dangers from *evil* companions are continual, extreme, and in a sense infinite. They are found every moment, and in every place: especially in the haunts, customarily frequented by men of this character. Here all the means of sinning are gathered together. *The companion of fools*, or wicked men, saith God, *shall be destroyed.*

The advantages of virtuous company, on the contrary, are great and unspeakable. Their sentiments and conduct are such as their consciences approve; and such as God approves. Their sentiments are all conformed to the Scriptures. Their conduct is the natural fruit of their sentiments: not perfect indeed; but sincere, amiable, and excellent. In this character is presented a powerful check upon sin, and a powerful support to virtue. No persons can give so alarming an exhibition of the evil, guilt, and danger of sin, as they. No persons can place virtue in so alluring a light. They have felt the evils of sin, the foretastes of immortality, and the pleasures of holiness. They, therefore, can enter, with the heart, into both subjects; and can speak of both with feelings, unknown to other men, and incapable of being known, until they become virtuous. Hence good may be gained, and evil avoided, by means of their company, by means peculiar to them, which is often unattainable, or unavoidable, in any other manner.

By shutting himself out from this company, the profane person, therefore, voluntarily relinquishes one of the chief blessings of life; one of the great means of securing life eternal. Nothing, perhaps, beside the worship of God, and a religious education, contributes more frequently, or more certainly, to bring men into the strait and narrow way; to keep them in it, after they have once entered; or to aid, and quicken, them in the journey towards heaven. Nothing, on the other hand, seems more readily, or regularly to withdraw them from danger, guilt, and ruin. All this good the profane person voluntarily casts away. Other sinners, of more decent characters, often enjoy this blessing; and find it a blessing indeed. But the profane person carries with him the label of rejection: the mark of outlawry from virtuous society; a label, voluntarily worn; a mark, branded by himself.

At the same time, he is consigned in the same voluntary manner to the company of wicked men. Here virtue and hope are blasted together. Here, all the curses, opposed to the blessings above recited, multiply, and thrive. Here, his life is wasted; and his soul hazarded, assassinated, and destroyed for ever.

4thly. *Profaneness exposes men to the terrible denunciation of the text.*

The occasion on which this threatening was pronounced, the Person by whom, and the manner and circumstances in which it was published to mankind, ought to render it peculiarly alarming to every man, who is guilty of this sin. *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain;* said the Creator of all things, with an audible voice from Sinai, while the world was trembling beneath him; *for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, who taketh his name in vain.* This was the declaration of Him, who is thus profaned, and thus mocked; of him, who is an ear-witness of all this profaneness and mockery; of him, by whom the wretch, guilty of this fearful transgression, will be judged and condemned, at the final day. The threatening is denounced against a single transgression of this nature. What, then, must be the guilt, and the danger, of profane persons, deformed as they usually are with transgressions, scarcely numerable by man! What a chain of profanations, of oaths and curses, will every such person drag after him to the throne of God! How will he tremble at the retrospect; shrink from the dread tribunal, before his cause is heard; and realize the sentence of condemnation before it is pronounced!

The threatening, here declared, is a sentence, gone forth beforehand from the tribunal of eternal Justice, against this particular transgression: a doom, already pronounced, and hastening to its execution, by the hand of Him, from whom no sinner can escape. It is a sentence, which cannot be misunderstood; against a crime, which cannot be doubted. Many sins are of such a nature, that the sinner may question the reality of his guilt. Here, the crime is perfectly known, and the sentence absolutely decisive. The profane person, therefore, may consider himself as tried, judged, and condemned, already; judged, and condemned, from amidst the thunders and lightnings of the mount of God: and wo be to him, who does not *believe, and tremble.*

REMARKS.

1st. *These observations exhibit in a strong light the depravity of the human heart.*

In the progress of these discourses, it has been clearly evinced, that profaneness is a sin, perpetrated in an almost endless variety of forms; that it is a sin, attended with enormous guilt, and exposing the perpetrator to immense danger. It has also been shown, that the inducements to it are very few, and very small: while the motives, opposed to it, are very many, and very great. Yet how evident is it, that this very sin is, and ever has been, practised by incomprehensible multitudes of mankind! The *Jews* were profane: the *Mahommedans* are profane: the Christian nations are profane: and the Heathen nations are, and ever were, profane to such Gods, as they acknowledged. Among all these nations, or, in other words, throughout the whole earth, and throughout the whole reign of time, innumerable *individuals* have ever been pro-

fane. Indeed, in one form and another, no man has been guiltless of that irreverence towards God, in which the essence of profaneness consists. The evil, therefore, spreads over the world; and, in one form, or another, attaches itself to every child of *Adam*.

How wonderful a specimen of human corruption is presented in the so general profanation of the Name of God, exhibited in light-minded cursing and swearing! How perfectly at a loss is Reason for a motive to originate, and explain, this conduct! Why should the Name of the Creator be treated with irreverence? Why should not any thing else be uttered by man, if we consider him merely as a rational being, without recurring at all to his moral and accountable character, rather than language of this nature? Certainly, it contributes not, in the least degree, to the advancement of any purpose, cherished by the mind of the profane person; unless that purpose is mere profaneness. I know well, that *passion is often pleaded for the use of this language*. But why should passion prompt to profaneness? Anger, one would suppose, would naturally vent itself in expressions of resentment against the person, who had provoked us. But this person is always a fellow-creature; a man like ourselves. In what way, or in what degree, is God concerned in this matter? What has the passion, what has the provocation, to do with Him, his name, or his character? Why do we affront and injure him, because a creature, infinitely unlike him, has affronted and injured us? I know that *Custom, also, is pleaded*, as an extenuation, and perhaps as an explanation, of this crime. But how came such a custom to exist? How came any rational being ever to think of profaning the name of God? How came any other rational being to follow him in this wickedness? Whence was it, that so many millions of those, who ought to be rational beings, have followed them both? What end can it have answered? What honour, gain, or pleasure, can it have furnished? What taste can it have gratified? What desire, what affection, can it have indulged? What end can the profane person have proposed to himself?

Can any explanation be given of this conduct, except that it springs from love to wickedness itself? From a heart fixedly opposed to its Maker; pleased with affronting him; loving to abuse his character, and to malign his glorious agency? A heart in which sin is gratuitous; by which in juster language nothing is gained, much is plainly lost, and every thing is hazarded? What, beside the love of sinning; what, but the peculiar turpitude of the character; can be the source, or the explanation of this conduct?

2dly. *These observations teach us the Goodness of God in alarming mankind concerning this sin in so solemn a manner.*

The *guilt* of profaneness cannot be questioned: nor can there be any more question concerning the *danger* to which the perpe-

trator exposes himself. In such a situation, how kindly has the Lawgiver of the universe warned mankind against the perpetration, by announcing to them, in this affecting manner, the evil to which it would expose them. He saw, perfectly, their tendency to this wickedness; and with infinite mercy has been pleased to provide those means for their safety, which are best calculated to insure it.

If a child were advancing towards the brow of a precipice; how kindly would he and his parent regard a friend, who should announce to him his danger, direct him with sure guidance, and influence him with efficacious motives, to avoid it. The threatening, contained in this command, and, together with it, all those which are found in the Scriptures, are calculated for this very purpose. They warn us of approaching guilt: they declare to us approaching danger. Thousands and millions of the human race have been actually saved by them from impending destruction. Terrible are they indeed to obstinate sinners, because they disturb them in their beloved course of sinning, and because they intend not to cease from sin. Still they are not the less mercifully given. They are the very means, by which immense multitudes have been *plucked, as brands, out of the burning.*

3dly. *Let me warn all those, who hear me, to shun profaneness.*

To this end, *fix in your minds a solemn and controlling sense of the evil and danger of this sin.* Make this sense habitual, in such a manner, that it may be always ready to rise up in the mind, and present itself before your eyes. Feel, that you will gain nothing here, and lose every thing hereafter.

Under the influence of these views, *keep the evil always at a great distance.* Mark the men, who are profane; and avoid their company, as you would avoid the plague. Shun the places where profaneness abounds, or where it may be expected to abound, as you would shun a quicksand. *Avoid them; pass not by them; turn from them; pass away.* Remember, that these places *are the way to hell; going down to the chambers of death.*

Unceasingly say to yourselves, *Thou God seest me.* Unceasingly say to yourselves, *The Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.* Remember, that he is most mercifully disposed to be your *Father, and everlasting friend;* that he cannot be your friend, unless you regard him *with reverence and Godly fear;* and that, if He be not your friend, you will throughout eternity be friendless, and helpless, and hopeless. What then will become of you?

Carefully avoid *mentioning his great Name on any, except solemn, occasions;* and *in any manner which is not strictly reverential.* Never speak, never think, of God, his Son, his Spirit, his Name, his works, his Word, or his Institutions, without solemnity and awe. Never approach his House, or his Word, without reverence. Prepare yourselves by solemn consideration and humble

prayer for his Worship. Shun all that language which, though not directly profane, is merely a series of steps towards profaneness; and all those thoughts of sacred things, which are tinctured with levity. At the same time, daily beseech him to preserve you; and let your unceasing prayer be, *Set a watch, O Lord! before my mouth: keep the door of my lips.*

4thly. *Let me solemnly admonish the profane persons, in this assembly, of their guilt and danger.*

You, unhappily for yourselves, are those, who *take the name of God in vain;* and of course are now, or soon will be, subjects of all the guilt and danger, which I have specified. *Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord, Consider your ways.* Remember what you are doing; against whom your evil tongues are directed; who is the object of your contempt and mockery.

Ask yourselves what you gain; what you expect to gain; what you do not lose. Remember, that you lose your reputation, at least in the minds of all the wise and good, and all the blessings of their company and friendship; that you sacrifice your peace of mind; that you break down all those principles, on which Virtue may be grafted, and, with them, every rational hope of eternal life; that you are rapidly becoming more and more corrupted, day by day; and that, with this deplorable character, you are preparing to go to the judgment. Think what it will be to swear, and curse, to mock God, and insult your Redeemer, through life; to carry your oaths and curses to a dying bed; to enter eternity with blasphemies in your mouths; and to stand before the final bar, when the last sound of profaneness has scarcely died upon your tongues.

If these considerations do not move you; if they do not make you tremble at the thought of what you are doing; if they do not force you to a solemn pause in the career of iniquity; if they do not compel you to retrace your downward steps, and return, while it is in your power, to reformation and safety; I can only say, that you are hurried by an evil spirit to destruction; that you are maniacs in sin, on whom neither reason nor religion has any influence; and that you will soon find yourselves in the eternal dungeon of darkness and despair.

SERMON CV.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.—THE PERPETUITY OF THE SABBATH.

EXODUS xx. 8—11.—*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

THE Command, which is given us in this passage of Scripture, requires no explanation. I shall, therefore, proceed immediately to the consideration of the great subject, which it presents to our view, under the following heads:

I. *The Perpetual Establishment of the Sabbath:* and

II. *The Manner, in which it is to be observed.*

I. *I shall endeavour to prove the Perpetual Establishment of the Sabbath in the Scriptures.*

This subject I propose to consider at length; and, in the course of my examination, *shall attempt to offer direct proof of its Perpetuity*, and *then to answer Objections.*

In direct proof of this institution I allege,

1. *The Text.*

The text is one of the commands of the *Moral Law.* Now it is acknowledged, that the Moral Law is, in the most universal sense, binding on men of every age, and every country. If this, this command be a part of that Law; all mankind must be under immoveable obligations to obey the injunctions, which it contains.

That it is a part of the Moral Law I argue from the fact, *that it is united with the other commands, which are acknowledged to be of this nature.* It is twice placed in the midst of the decalogue; in the context, and in the fifth of Deuteronomy. This fact, you will remember, was the result of design, and not of accident; a design, formed and executed by God himself, and not by Moses.

I argue it, also, from the fact, *that this command, together with the remaining nine, was spoken with an awful and audible voice from the midst of the thunders, and lightnings, which enveloped Mount Sinai.* The splendour and Majesty of this scene were such, that *all the people, who were in the camp, trembled. And when they saw the thunderings, and lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they removed, and stood afar off: and said unto Moses, Speak thou with us; and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.* Even *Moses* himself *exceedingly feared and quaked.*

I argue this doctrine also from the fact that *this command was written by the finger of God, on one of the two tables of stone, originally prepared by himself, and destined to contain nothing, but this and the other precepts of the Decalogue.* It was afterwards written again by the same hand, after these tables were broken, on one of two similar tables, prepared by *Moses.* A table of stone, and a pillar of stone, were, in ancient times, direct symbols of the perpetuity of whatever was engraved on them. This very natural symbol God was pleased to adopt in the present case, to show the perpetual obligation of these commands. The remainder of the law, given by Moses, was all written in a book; and was here intentionally, and entirely distinguished, as to its importance, from the Decalogue. *The tables of stone on which these commands were written, were fashioned by the hand of God himself.* This also, forms a peculiar article of distinction between the Decalogue, and the rest of the *Jewish* law. Nothing but the Decalogue ever received such an honour, as this. It was written on one of these tables by the finger of God. This also is a distinction peculiar to the Decalogue.

When *Moses*, in his zeal to destroy the idolatry of the *Israelites*, had broken the two tables of stone, fashioned and written upon in this manner; God directed him to make two other tables of stone, like the first. *On these he was pleased to write the same commands a second time.* In this act he has taught us, that he was pleased to become, a second time, the recorder of these precepts with his own hand, rather than that the entire distinction between these precepts, and others, should be obliterated.

Every part of this solemn transaction, it is to be remembered, was *the result of contrivance and design; of contrivance and design, on the part of God himself.* Every part of it, therefore, speaks a language, which is to be examined, and interpreted, by us. Now let me ask, whether this language is not perfectly intelligible, and perfectly unambiguous. Is it not clear beyond every rational debate, that God designed to distinguish these precepts from every other part of the *Mosaic* law, both as to their superior importance, and their perpetuity? Is it not incredible, that God should mark, in so solemn a manner, this command, together with the remaining nine, unless he intended, that all, to whom these precepts should come, that is, all Jews and Christians, or all who should afterwards read the Scriptures, should regard these Commands as possessing that very importance, which he thus significantly gave them; should consider them as being, in a peculiar sense, his law; and hold them as being perpetually, and universally, obligatory?

It is further to be remembered, that *this command is delivered in the same absolute manner, as the other nine.* There is no limitation to the phraseology, in which it is contained. *Honour thy father and thy mother*, is obligatory on all children, to whom this precept shall come. *Thou shalt not steal*, is a precept, prohibiting the

stealing of every man, who shall know it. Every *Gentile*, as well as every *Jew*, *who sinneth under the law*, *will*, according to the spirit of the Apostle's declaration, *be judged by the law*. Agreeably to this equitable construction, every person, to whom this precept shall come, is bound to *remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy*.

But it is acknowledged, that "all the remaining commands are indeed universally obligatory; being in their own nature moral, and having therefore an universal application to mankind. This, however, is plainly a Command merely positive, and therefore destitute of this universality of application. It may, of course, be dispensed with; may be supposed to have been delivered to the *Jews* only, like their ceremonial and judicial law; may have been destined to continue, so long as their national state continued; and, thus may have been designed to be of neither universal, nor perpetual, obligation."

To this objection, which I have stated at full length, that I might be sure of doing justice to it, I give the following answer.

First; it appears to me evident, that, so far as my information extends, the distinction between moral and positive commands has been less clearly made by moral writers, than most other distinctions. It will be impossible for any man clearly to see, and to limit, exactly, what they intend when they use these terms. To remove this difficulty, so far as my audience are concerned, and to enable them to know what I design, while I am using these words, I will attempt to define them with some particularity.

A moral precept, is one, which regulates the moral conduct of Intelligent creatures, and binds the will and the conscience. It is either limited, or universal: it is universal; or, in other words, is obligatory on the consciences of Intelligent creatures, at all times, and in all circumstances, when their situations and relations are universally such, as to render the conduct required in these precepts their duty invariably, and in the nature of things. Of this kind, the number of precepts is certainly very small. We are bound to love God, and our neighbour, invariably. But the *fifth command*, in its obvious sense, can have no application, where the relations of parent and child do not exist; *the sixth*, where rational beings are immortal; *the seventh*, where the distinction of sex is not found. To these precepts, therefore, the criterion of universality, generally regarded as the principal mark of the moral nature of precepts, is plainly inapplicable; and it is altogether probable, that these precepts will have no existence in any world but this. Limited moral precepts are those, which require the duties, arising from such relations and circumstances, as exist only for limited periods, or among certain classes or divisions of Rational beings. Thus various moral precepts found in the judicial law of *Moses* obligated to obedience none but the people of that nation, and strangers dwelling among them. Thus, also, he, who has no parents, is not required to perform the duties, enjoined upon a

child; he, who has no wife, those required of a husband; and he, who has no children, those demanded of a father.

Positive precepts are such, as require conduct of moral beings, which, antecedently to the promulgation of them, was not their duty; and, independently of them, would never have become their duty; but would have remained for ever a matter of indifference. It ought to be observed here, that some precepts are considered as merely positive, because the duties, enjoined by them, were unknown, and would have continued unknown, to those, of whom they are required, independently of the publication of the precepts. These precepts, however, are no less of a moral nature, than if the duties, which they enjoin, and the relations from which those duties spring, had always been perfectly known. A precept of a merely positive nature creates a duty, which, but for the precept, would not exist; which does not depend for its existence on the nature of the relations, sustained by the subject as a Rational being; but is intended to promote some useful, incidental purpose, and is not due, nor demanded from the subject in other cases, although sustaining exactly the same relations. Thus the precept, requiring the building of booths at the passover, may be considered as a positive precept. Thus also many others, enjoining particular parts of the *Jewish* ritual.

Secondly; The precept contained in the text is according to these definitions a moral, and not a positive, precept. The Sabbath was instituted for the following ends.

It was intended to give the laborious classes of mankind an opportunity of resting from toil.

It was intended to be a commemoration of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God in the Creation of the universe.

It was intended to furnish an opportunity of increasing holiness in man, while in a state of innocence.

It was intended to furnish an opportunity to fallen man of acquiring holiness, and of obtaining salvation.

In every one of these respects, the Sabbath is equally useful. important, and necessary, to every child of *Adam*. It was no more necessary to a *Jew* to rest after the labour of six days was ended, than to any other man. It was no more necessary to a *Jew* to commemorate the perfections of God, displayed in the work of creation; it was no more necessary to a *Jew* to gain holiness, or to increase it; it is no more necessary to a *Jew* to seek, or to obtain, salvation. Whatever makes either of these things interesting to a *Jew* in any degree, makes them in the same degree interesting to every other man. The nature of the command, therefore, teaches, as plainly as the nature of a command can teach, that it is of universal application to mankind. It has then this great criterion of a moral precept: viz. universality of application.

That it is the duty of all men to commemorate the perfections of God, displayed in the work of creation, cannot be questioned. Every living man is bound to contemplate, understand, and adore, these perfections. But we cannot know them in the abstract; or as they exist merely in Him. We learn them, only as displayed in his Works, and in his Word. We are bound, therefore, to learn them, as thus displayed; and that in proportion to the clearness and glory of the display. The clearness and glory, with which these perfections are manifested in the work of creation, are transcendently great; and demand from all creatures a contemplation proportionally attentive, and an adoration proportionally exalted. To commemorate this glorious work, therefore, is a plain and important duty of all men: this being the peculiar service demanded of them by his character, and his relation to them as their Creator. But this commemoration was the original and supreme object of the command. It cannot be denied, that this is a moral service; nor that the precept requiring it, is a moral precept.

To perform this service in the best manner, is also, as much a moral duty, as to perform it at all. If any duty be not performed in the best manner; it is only performed in part: the remainder being of course omitted. But no words can be necessary to prove, that we are equally obliged to perform one part of a duty as another.

If we know not, and cannot know, the best manner; we are invariably bound to choose the best which we do know. If, however, the best manner be made known to us; we are invariably obliged to adopt it, to the exclusion of all others.

The best manner, in the present case, is made known to us in this Command. We are assured, that it is the best manner, by the fact, that God has chosen it. No man can doubt whether God's manner is the best; nor whether it is his own duty to adopt it rather than any other. This manner is a commemoration of the perfections of God, thus disclosed, on one day in seven.

That a particular day, or set time, should be devoted to this important purpose, is indispensable. The duty is a social one; in which theRational creatures of God, in this world, are universally to unite. But unless a particular day were set apart for this duty, the union intended would be impossible.

It is of the last importance, that the day should be appointed by God. Men would not agree on any particular day. If they should agree, it would always be doubtful whether the time chosen by them was the best; and the day appointed by men, would have neither authority, sacredness, nor sanction. In a matter, merely of human institution, all, who pleased, would dissent; and in such a world as ours, most, or all, would choose to dissent. The whole duty, therefore, would be left undone; and the glorious perfections of God, unfolded in the work of Creation, would be

wholly forgotten. This precept is, also, entirely of a moral nature, as to the whole End, at which it aims, so far as man is concerned. This End, is the attainment, and the increase, of holiness. Of every man living, and of every man alike, this is the highest interest, and the highest duty. To this end, as to the former, which is indeed inseparably united with this, the Sabbath is indispensable.

The Sabbath is eminently moral, also, as the indispensable means of preserving in the world a real and voluntary obedience of all the other commands in the Decalogue. Wherever the Sabbath is not, Religion dies of course; and Morality of every kind, except so far as convenience and selfishness may keep the forms of it alive, is forgotten. But all those means, which are indispensable to the existence of Morality, or, in better language, Religion, are themselves of a moral nature, and of universal obligation; since without them, nothing moral could exist.

It makes no difference, here, whether we could have known, without information from God; that one day in seven would be the best time; and furnish the best manner of performing these things, or not. It is sufficient, that we know it now.

Thus *the fourth Command* is of a really moral nature, no less than the others; and as truly of incalculable importance, and indispensable obligation, to all the children of *Adam*. Its place in the decalogue, therefore, was given it with consummate propriety: and *what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

If it were intended to abolish a command, given so plainly, and with circumstances of such amazing solemnity; the abrogation would, undoubtedly, have been communicated in a manner, equally clear with that, in which the command itself was originally given. But the Scriptures contain nothing, which resembles an abrogation of it, communicated either clearly, or obscurely. When Christ abolished the ceremonial and civil laws of the *Jews*, so far as they might be thought to extend to the *Gentiles;* and taught the true moral system of the Old Testament; and when the Apostles afterwards completed the Evangelical account of this subject: it is, I think, incredible, that, if this precept were to be abolished at all, neither he, nor they, should give a single hint concerning the abolition. As both have left it just where they found it, without even intimating, that it was at all to be annulled; we may reasonably conclude, that its obligation has never been lessened.

In the mean time, it ought to be observed, that many other precepts, comprised in the *Mosaic* law, which are universally acknowledged to be of a moral nature, were nevertheless not introduced into the Decalogue; were not spoken by the voice of God; nor written with his finger; nor placed on the tables of stone, fashioned by himself. Why was this supreme distinction made in favour of

the precept, now under discussion? This question I may perhaps answer more particularly hereafter. It is sufficient to observe at present, that it arose solely from the superior importance of the precept itself.

2. *The Perpetual Establishment of the Sabbath is evident from its Original Institution.*

Of this we have the following account in *Genesis* ii. 1—3. *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work, which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.* The proofs which this passage affords for the perpetuity of the Sabbath, respect *the time*, and *the end*, of the Institution.

The time of the Institution was the seventh day, after the creation was begun, and the first day, after it was ended. At this time, none of the human race were in being, but our first parents. For *them* the Sabbath was instituted; and clearly, therefore, for all their posterity also. If it was not instituted for *all* their posterity, it was not instituted for *any* of them: for, certainly, there can be no reason given, why it was instituted for one more than another. The *Jews*, particularly, were no more nearly connected with *Adam*, than we are; and no more interested in any thing, commanded to him, than are the Gentiles. Accordingly, it is, so far as I know, universally conceded, that, if the Sabbath was instituted at this time, it is obligatory on all men to the end of the world.

The resting of God on this day, alleged in the text as a primary and authoritative reason, why the Sabbath should be kept holy, is a reason extending to all men alike. In my own view it is incredible, that God should rest on this day, to furnish an example, to the *Jewish* nation merely, of observing the Sabbath; or that so solemn a transaction, as this, in its own nature affecting the whole human race alike, should be intentionally confined in its influence to a ten thousandth part of mankind. The example of God, so far as it is imitable, is in its very nature authoritative, and obligatory on every Intelligent creature; and in the present case, plainly, on the whole human race. For man to limit it, where God himself has not been pleased to limit it, is evidently unwarrantable, and indefensible.

The End of the institution plainly holds out the same universality of obligation. I have already observed, that this is two-fold; viz. to commemorate the glory of God, displayed in the creation; and to attain, and increase, holiness in the soul of man. I have also observed that all men are alike interested in both these objects. Nor can there be a single pretence, that any nation, or any person, is more interested in either, than any other person or nation. Every individual stands in exactly the same relations to God; is under

exactly the same obligations: and is bound, in this case, to duties exactly the same.

3. *The Perpetuity of the Sabbath is clearly taught in Isaiah* lvi. 6—8.

Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants; every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be acceptable on my altar: for my house shall be called, An house of prayer for all people. The Lord God, who gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.

From this passage it is evident, that, when the house of God shall become a house of prayer for all people, and when the outcasts of Israel, and others beside them, shall be gathered unto him, that is, Christ; then the Sabbath shall continue a divine institution; that it shall be a duty to keep it from polluting it; and that those who keep it, particularly the sons of the stranger; or the Gentile nations; shall be accepted and blessed in thus keeping it, and shall be made joyful in God's house of prayer.

But the house of God was never, in any sense, called *An house of prayer for all people*, until after the dispensation of the Gospel began: viz. until the house of God was found wherever *two or three met together in the name of Christ;* until the period, when mankind were to *worship God, neither in Jerusalem, nor in the mountain of Samaria, but wherever they worshipped in spirit and in truth.* Under this dispensation, therefore, the Sabbath was still to continue a divine institution; was to be kept free from pollution; and the keeping of it was to be blessed, according to the declarations of the unerring Spirit of prophecy.

This prediction is a part of the unchangeable counsels of JEHOVAH. It could not have been written, unless it had been true. It could not have been true, unless fulfilled by this very observation of the Sabbath. The Sabbath could not have been thus observed, and men could not have been thus blessed in observing it, unless, at the very time of this observance, it had still remained an Institution of God. For God himself has declared, that mankind *shall not add to his words, nor diminish ought from them;* and that, instead of blessing those, who add to the words written in the Scriptures, he will *add to them the plagues, which are written in the Scriptures.* But to add to the *Institutions* of God is to add to his *Word* in the most arrogant and guilty manner. If the Sabbath be not now a divine institution; he, who observes it as such, adds to the Institutions of God, and is grossly guilty of this arrogance. He may, therefore, certainly as well as justly, expect to find a curse, and not a blessing; to be destroyed with a more terrible destruction, than that which *Nadab* and *Abihu* experienced, for

adding to the Institutions of God one of their own, of a far less extraordinary and guilty nature.

But how different from all this has been the fact! How exactly, as well as gloriously, has this prediction been fulfilled! God has really *gathered unto Christ others, beside the outcasts of Israel.* The Gentiles, *the sons of the stranger, have,* in immense multitudes, *joined themselves to the Lord. They have served him. They have loved his name. They have kept the Sabbath from polluting it. They have taken hold of his covenant. They have been made joyful in his house of prayer: and their sacrifices, and their burnt-offerings, have been accepted upon his altar: and his house has been called an house of prayer for all people.* Thus, as *Isaiah* predicted, there has actually been a Sabbath under the dispensation of the Gospel, remaining now for almost eighteen hundred years; and this Sabbath has been attended with the peculiar blessings, predicted by this Evangelical Prophet.

4. *The Perpetuity of the Sabbath is fairly argued from Psalm* cxviii. 19—26.

Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them; and I will praise the Lord. This gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The Stone, which the builders refused, is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day, which the Lord hath made. We will rejoice, and be glad, in it. Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity! Blessed be he, that cometh in the name of the Lord. We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.

This Psalm, particularly the prophecy contained in these words, is explained by *St. Peter, as referring to Christ; the true head-stone of the corner, rejected by the Jewish builders;* and, of course, as referring to the times of the Christian dispensation. In these times, then, there was to be *a day, which the Lord had made;* not in the literal sense; for in this sense he had made all days; but in the spiritual sense; that is, a day, which he had sanctified; consecrated to himself; devoted to his own worship; of a common and secular day, made into a holy and religious one. It was a day, on which *the gates of righteousness* were to be *opened:* that is, the gates of the sanctuary, or house of God; and styled *the gate,* or gates, *of the Lord.* It was a day, on which *the righteous,* as a body, were *to enter into them.* It was the day, on which *the Lord became their Salvation.* It was the day, on which *the Stone, rejected by the builders, became the headstone of the corner.* It was a day, on which *prayers were to be offered up, and praises to be sung to God.* Finally, it was a day, in which *the righteous were to receive blessings from the house of the Lord.*

All my audience must have anticipated the conclusion, as flowing irresistibly even from this slight examination of the passage:

that *this was a day, devoted to religious employments*, and particularly *to the public worship of God.* It is equally evident, that it is *the day, on which Christ arose from the dead*, or, in other words, *became the head-stone of the corner.* It is, therefore, *the Sabbath;* the only day, ever devoted to purposes of this nature by the authority of Inspiration. It is *a Sabbath*, also, *existing under the Gospel* or *after the resurrection of Christ.* Of course, it is to continue to the end of the world; for all the institutions, which exist under the Gospel, are perpetual.

5. *The Perpetual Establishment of the Sabbath, is evident from Revelation* i. 10, *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.*

The book of Revelation was probably written about the year 96, and of course many years after the resurrection of Christ. At this time, there was *a day, generally known to Christians by the name of the Lord's day.* It was also entitled the Lord's day by the pen of *St. John*, under the immediate influence of Inspiration. It was, therefore, so called with the approbation of the Spirit of truth. But this could not have been, unless it had been originally instituted by God himself. That the Apostle, in this manner of mentioning it, accords intentionally with this denomination, as being the proper one, will, I presume, not be disputed; because the contrary supposition would make him lend his own sanction to a false, as well as an unauthorized, denomination of this day, and to *the false doctrine involved in it;* viz. that *there was a day, consecrated with propriety to the Lord*, or, in other words, *consecrated by divine appointment:* since no other consecration of it would have any propriety. If this doctrine was false, as according to the supposition it must be, it could not fail to prove in a high degree dangerous; as it would naturally lead all, who read this book, to hold a Religious Institution as established by God, which he had not in fact appointed; and thus, by *worshipping him according to the commandments of men, to worship him in vain.* The guilt, and the mischiefs, of this doctrine, thus received and obeyed, would be incomprehensible. The Spirit of truth, who directed the pen of *St. John*, cannot have sanctioned this doctrine, unless it was true; nor have given this denomination to the day spoken of, unless it was given by the will of God.

There was, therefore, at the period specified, and under the Gospel, a day holden by the Apostle, by Christians generally, and by God himself, as the Lord's day; or a day, peculiarly consecrated to Christ, the Lord mentioned by St. John in this passage. There is now, there has always been, but one such day; and but one manner, in which a day can be the Lord's. This day is the Sabbath; a holy, heavenly rest from every sinful, and every secular concern. It is his, by being authoritatively appropriated to his use by himself; and by his requiring mankind, whenever it returns, to consecrate their time, their talents, and themselves, to his im-

mediate service and religious worship. As, then, there was such a day, a day consecrated to the Lord, a Sabbath, at the time when the Revelation of St. John was written; so this day is perpetually established. For, every institution under the Gospel, the last dispensation of God to mankind, will remain in full force to the end of the world.

SERMON CVI.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.—THE PERPETUITY AND CHANGE OF THE SABBATH.

EXODUS xx. 8—11.—*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

IN the preceding discourse, from these words, I proposed to consider,

I. *The Perpetual Establishment of the Sabbath;* and,

II. *The Manner, in which it is to be observed.*

The first of these propositions I examined, at some length, in that discourse: and shall now go on *to offer some additional observations concerning the same subject.* If I have proved, as I flatter myself I have, that *the Sabbath is an Institution, designed to last to the end of the world;* it will naturally occur to my audience, as a question of prime importance in the consideration of this subject, "Why is it, that you and other Christians, instead of observing the Sabbath originally instituted, keep another day as the Sabbath; a day, of which no mention was made in the Institution, and for the religious observation of which we find no express command either in the Old or New Testament?"

This question is certainly asked with unobjectionable propriety; and certainly demands a candid and satisfactory answer. Such an answer I will now endeavour to give.

It is unquestionably true, that the Institution, whatever it is, is to be taken as we find it in the Scriptures; and that men are in no respect to change it. He, who made it, is the only being in the universe, who has the right to abrogate, or to alter, that which he has made. As we find it, then, in the Scriptures, we are bound to take it; whether agreeable to our own ideas of wisdom and propriety, or not.

In order to explain my own views of this subject, it will be useful to observe, that *this Institution obviously consists of two parts; the Sabbath, or holy rest; and the Day, on which it is holden.* These are plainly alluded to, as distinct from each other, in the text; where it is said, *The Lord rested the seventh day, and blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.* This language is chosen of design;

and as I apprehend, with a propriety, intentionally instructive to *us*. God did not bless *the seventh day, nor hallow it as the seventh day; but only as being the day on which the Sabbath, or the holy rest, was to be kept*. Were the Sabbath, then, warrantably to be kept, at different periods, on each of the days of the week; the blessing would follow it, on whatever day it was holden.

It was plain then, that *the Sabbath*, being a thing entirely distinct from *the day on which it is kept*, may be a perpetual institution; and yet be kept, if God should so order it, on any, or successively on all, the days of the week. If, then, the day, on which the Sabbath was to be holden, should by divine appointment be a different one from that, which was originally established; the Sabbath itself, the substance of the Institution, might still remain the same. All, that would be changed, would plainly be a given day of the week; a thing perfectly circumstantial; and of no other importance than that, which circumstances gave it.

The day, I say, might be altered without altering at all *the substance of the Institution*. Still it could be altered only by divine appointment. The same authority, which instituted the Sabbath, appointed also the day, on which it was to be holden: and no other authority is competent to change either in any degree. If, then, we cannot find in the Scriptures plain and ample proofs of an abrogation of the original day; or the substitution of a new one; the day undoubtedly remains in full force and obligation, and is now religiously to be celebrated by all the race of *Adam*. It shall be the business of this discourse to collect to a point the light, which the Scriptures afford us concerning this important subject.

1. *The nature of the subject furnishes room to suppose, that the day, on which the Sabbath was to be celebrated under the Christian dispensation, might be a different one from that, which was originally appointed.*

The End of the Institution, mentioned in the text, is the Commemoration of the glory of God in the Creation of the world. The reason, why God chose, that the manifestation of himself in that wonderful work should be commemorated, rather than that which was made in the Deluge, or the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, was, it is presumed, *the peculiar greatness of the work itself, and of the display, which it furnished of his perfections*. If this be admitted, as it probably will be by every sober man; it must also be admitted, that we ought, according to this scheme, to expect any other work of God, of still greater importance, and more glorious to the divine character, than the Creation itself to be commemorated with equal or greater solemnity. But *the Work of Redemption*, or, as it is sometimes styled in the Scriptures, *the New Creation*, is a more glorious work, than that of creating the heavens and the earth. This doctrine may be elucidated by the following considerations.

In the first place, *The agent in both these works is the same. St. Paul* expressly declares, That *Christ in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth; that the heavens are the work of his hands;* Heb. i. 10; and *that all things, visible and invisible, were created by him, and for him.* Col. i. 16. *St. John*, also, teaches us, that *all things were made by him; and that without him there was not one thing made, which has existed.* John i. 3. *The same Person, therefore, is honoured* in a commemoration of both these wonderful works.

Secondly; *The End of a work*, that is, *the reason for which it is done, is of more importance, than the work itself.* This truth will be admitted on all hands. No Intelligent being, who claims the character of wisdom, ever undertakes a work without an end sufficiently important to justify the means, adopted for its accomplishment. Much less will this be supposed of God. But *the End of Creation is Providence;* and of all the works of Providence, *the work of Redemption*, or *the New Creation, is incalculably the most important;* the hinge, on which all the rest turn; the work, towards the completion of which all the rest are directed: in a word, the End of them all. Accordingly, St. Paul says, *Who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent, that now unto Principalities, and powers, in heavenly places, might be known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God. The display of the Wisdom of God, by the Church, in the work of Redemption, was therefore, the intent*, or *End, for which all things were created by Jesus Christ.* Without the work of Redemption, then, the purpose of God in creating all things, and the real use of the things themselves, would have been prevented.

Thirdly; *The superior importance of the New Creation is evident in this fact; that the old creation, by its unceasing changes, continually decays and degenerates, while the New Creation becomes by its own changes unceasingly brighter and better.*

Fourthly; *The old creation is a transitory work, made for consumption by fire: whereas the New is intended for eternal duration.*

Thus from the Nature of the case there is ample room to suppose, that the work of Redemption might, by divine appointment, be commemorated preferably to the work of creation.

2. *It is expressly foretold by the Prophet Isaiah, that the Work of Redemption shall be commemorated in preference to the work of Creation.* Is. lxv. 17, 18.

For behold, saith God, *I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, neither shall it come into mind. But be ye glad, and rejoice for ever, in that which I create: for behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and my people a joy.* In this passage of Scripture we are informed, that God designed to create what in the first of these verses is called *new heavens and a new earth.* This, in the second verse, is explained in *simple* language; and is said to be *creating the people of God a joy and a re-*

joicing. In other words, it is *no other than redeeming, and sanctifying, the souls of men;* by means of which *they become a rejoicing to God, and to each other.*

In this declaration of the Prophet there are two things, particularly claiming our attention. The first is, that the New Creation, or the Work of Redemption, is of far greater importance in the eye of God, than the former creation. The second is an express prediction, that the former creation shall not be remembered by the Church, nor come into mind; or, in other words, shall not be commemorated. This I understand, as almost all similar Jewish phrases are to be understood, in a comparative sense; and suppose the Prophet to intend, *that it shall be far less remembered*, and commemorated; as being of far less importance.

That this passage refers to the times of the Evangelical dispensation is certain from the prediction itself: since the new Creation is the very subject of it, and the commencement of that dispensation. It is equally evident, also, from the whole strain of the chapter.

This passage appears to me to place the fact in the clearest light, that a particular, superior, and extraordinary commemoration of the Work of Redemption by the Christian Church, in all its various ages, was a part of the good pleasure of God; and was designed by him to be accomplished in the course of his providence. But there neither is, nor ever was, any public, solemn commemoration of this work by the Christian Church, except that, which is holden on the first day of the week; or the day, in which Christ completed this great work by his resurrection from the dead. This prophecy has, therefore, been unfulfilled, so far as I see, unless it has been fulfilled in this very manner. But if it has been fulfilled in this manner; then this manner of fulfilling it has been agreeable to the true intention of the Prophecy, and to the good pleasure of God expressed in it; and is, therefore, that very part of the system of his Providence, which is here unfolded to mankind.

At the same time, it is to be remembered, that the former Institution is still substantially preserved. The Sabbath still returns upon one day in seven. The great facts, that *in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day*, are still presented to the mind in their full force. The work of creating the heavens and the earth is, therefore, regularly commemorated, according to the original institution of God: while the New Creation, as its importance demands, and as this prophecy directly foretels, takes its own superior place in the commemoration. Thus the Institution, instead of being abrogated in every respect, is only changed in such a manner, as to enlarge its usefulness and importance to mankind, and to become a solemn memorial of two wonderful works of God, instead of one. *The Sabbath itself* is unchanged. It still returns at the end of seven days. It is still a memorial of the Creation. But the Institution is enlarg-

ed in such a manner, as to commemorate, also, the work of Redemption.

With this Prophecy facts have corresponded in a wonderful manner. All Christians commemorate the work of Creation in their prayers and praises, their religious meditations and discourses, from Sabbath to Sabbath. But every Christian perfectly well knows, that the work of Redemption holds a far higher place in every private, and in every public, religious service; and that, according to the declaration of God in this passage, *the former is* comparatively *not remembered, neither does it come into mind.* At the same time, the Work of Redemption is not merely the chief, but the only, means of originating holiness in the soul, and altogether the principal means of advancing it towards perfection. In every respect, therefore, the Christian Sabbath is now better suited to the great ends of the Institution, than the original day. Until the time of Christ's resurrection, the seventh day commemorated the most glorious work, which God had ever accomplished, and the most wonderful display of the divine perfections. But by the resurrection of Christ, a new, and far more glorious, work was finished. While the Sabbath, therefore, was by divine appointment kept on the seventh day, it was exactly suited to the purpose of commemorating the most glorious work of God, which had ever taken place. But after the resurrection of Christ, the first day of the week was plainly better fitted, than any other day, to become a religious memorial of both these wonderful works, by being the day, on which Christ arose from the dead, and by returning regularly at the end of every six days. Whatever other opinions we adopt concerning this subject, it must, I think, be readily acknowledged, that no other day could possibly combine all these advantages.

This important consideration seems to be plainly intimated in the text. *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. The seventh day is the Sabbath. In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.* It cannot escape the notice of every reader of this passage, that the duty of remembering the Sabbath, to keep it holy, enjoined at the beginning, and the blessing and consecration mentioned at the end, are applied to the Sabbath, and not to the day; and that the seventh day is declared to be the *Sabbath day*, or the day on which the Sabbath is to be holden. The meaning of this is obviously, that the seventh day is, or was at that time, the existing day of the Sabbath; without determining how long it should continue to possess this character. God established it indefinitely; and unless he should be pleased to change it, perpetually, as the day of the Sabbath. But on whatever day he should think fit to establish the Sabbath, it was to be remembered, and kept holy. The blessing, also, and the sanctification, were annexed to the Sabbath day, and not to the seventh. In this

manner the Christian Church became informed of their duty, whenever the day should be changed; and, if they performed it faithfully, were assured of this peculiar blessing. Thus, also, they were preserved from the fears, which might otherwise arise, of losing the blessing annexed to the Sabbath, whenever the day, on which it should be holden, should be changed. Had the blessing, in this command, been annexed to the seventh day, it would probably have occasioned an immovable perplexity to the Christian Church, had they found the present account of the Sabbath contained in the New Testament.

3. *The hundred and eighteenth Psalm is a direct prediction, that the day of Christ's resurrection was to be the day on which the Sabbath should be holden under the Gospel.*

In the 14th verse of this Psalm the divine writer declares, that *the Lord is his strength, and his song; and is become his salvation.* This fact we know was accomplished, when Christ rose from the dead. In consequence of this great event, he hears *the voice of rejoicing, and of salvation, in the tabernacles of the righteous;* or in the house of God. In the 19th verse, he says, *Open to me the gates of righteousness. I will praise thee; for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.* This event he again describes in a new and under a very different image: *The Stone which the builders refused, is become the headstone of the corner.* He then subjoined, *This is the day which the Lord hath made:* that is, the day which Christ consecrated, or made into a holy day, when he became *the headstone of the corner:* that is, when he arose from the dead. He then adds, *We will rejoice and be glad in it:* that is, We, the Righteous; the Church of God; (for in *their* name he speaks throughout all the latter part of this Psalm, whether speaking in the singular, or plural.) In their name he says, in the following verse, *Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord! O Lord! I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* The words of the two last mentioned verses are applied directly to Christ by the multitudes who accompanied him in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. *The multitudes*, saith *St. Matthew, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!* The words of the last verse are also applied by Christ to himself, Matt. xxiv. 39, *For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* The comment of the multitudes is reasonably supposed to be that of the *Jewish* Church in general. That of Christ, and that of St. Peter, mentioned in the preceding discourse, are the decisive law of interpretation to the Christian Church. We are, therefore, warranted to conclude, that the Psalmist here declares not only the joy and gladness of the Christian Church *in the resurrection of Christ*, but *in the day on which he arose:* for he says, *This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.* This day he also declares

to be a day of public worship; a day, on which *the gates of righteousness were to be opened*, and *the Righteous*, or the Church as a body, *were to enter* them, and on which the ministers of the Gospel were to *bless them*, (in the *Jewish* language, or language of the Temple service) *out of the house of the Lord*; or in language adapted to the Christian manner of worship, *in* the house of the Lord. The substance of this comment is beautifully given by *Dr. Watts* in the two following stanzas.

The work, O Lord, is thine,
And wond'rous in our eyes;
This day declares it all divine,
This day did Jesus rise.

This is the glorious day,
That our Redeemer made;
Let us rejoice, and sing, and pray;
Let all the Church be glad.

4. *Christ has indicated, that the Seventh day should cease to be the Sabbath after his resurrection.*

In Matthew ix. 14, we are informed, that the disciples of *John* came to him, and inquired of him why his disciples did not fast, as well as themselves, and the *Pharisees*. Christ replied, *Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.* Christ was crucified, and buried, on Friday. At the close, then, of this day he was taken from the children of the bride-chamber; that is, from his disciples. Throughout *Saturday* he lay in the grave. On *the first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath*, he was restored to them again. This, then, became to them the proper season of fasting, according to his own declaration. But the Sabbath was *a festival* from the beginning. Such it continues to be unto the end. That it was to be such to the Christian Church is amply proved by the passages, formerly quoted from Is. lvi. 6, 7, and from the express declarations, just now quoted from the 118th Psalm. Fasting on this day can, therefore, never accord with its original and universal design. But on the seventh day, the day during which he lay in the grave, as he informs us, it was proper that they should fast. In this declaration it is indicated, not obscurely, that the seventh day would soon cease to be a season, fitted for the observance of the Sabbath.

It must be obvious to the least reflection, that this season of Christ's extreme humiliation is the most improper period conceivable *for commemorating, with joy and gladness, the wonderful work of Redemption.* Every thing, in this season, must appear to a Christian to demand humiliation and mourning, rather than exultation. During this period the enemies of Christ prevailed against him; and *the Serpent*, according to the first prophecy ever given

concerning him to this world, *bruised his heel.* To rejoice on this day would be to lay hold on the time of our Saviour's greatest sufferings, and deepest humiliation, as the proper season for our greatest exultation. This, certainly, was not the conduct of the Apostles. They mourned in the most melancholy and distressing manner. Nor do they appear ever to have regarded the Seventh day, afterwards, as the holy, joyful rest of God. On the contrary, they transferred this festival to another day.

5. *The Apostles, by their examples, have decisively taught us, that the day of Christ's Resurrection was to be the Christian Sabbath.*

On the first day of the week, the day of his resurrection, Christ met his disciples, assembled together. On the first day of the week following, he met them, again assembled together. On the first day of the week, at the feast, called *Pentecost*, the Spirit descended in a miraculous and glorious manner upon the Apostles. On the first day of the week, the disciples assembled together customarily, *to break bread*, and to make charitable contributions for their suffering brethren. From the three first of these facts, it is plain that Christ thought fit to honour this day with peculiar tokens of his approbation. From the last, that the Apostles thought themselves warranted to devote it to religious purposes.

I have already shown above, and sufficiently, that God has absolutely prohibited all men, under severe denunciations, and with terrible expressions of his anger, either *to form Religious Institutions, or to substitute their own Institutions for his.* It is clearly impossible, that the Apostles, who have taught us this very doctrine, should, under the influence of Inspiration, disobey him in this interesting particular by forming so remarkable a Religious Institution; abolishing that of God; and substituting their own in its place. Nothing is more evident to me, than that this example has all the weight, which can be attached to any precept whatever. This will especially appear, if we remember, that *Peter* with the eleven Apostles celebrated the first day of the week, and that *Paul* and his followers did the same. *Paul* received his Gospel immediately from Christ; and informs us in Galatians i. 2, that the Apostles at *Jerusalem added nothing to him.* For three years he never saw one of them; and had not the remotest correspondence with them. All the doctrines therefore, which *Paul* acknowledged, he received directly from Christ; and was indebted for none of them to his companions in the Apostleship. Yet *Peter* and his followers observed the first day of the week as the religious day; and *Paul* and his followers observed the same. This is evident from his direction to the Churches at *Galatia* and *Corinth* to *lay by them somewhat on the first day of the week*, for the poor Saints at *Jerusalem.* The reason, why the first day of the week is pitched upon for this purpose, is obviously this: that they

assembled customarily on the first day of the week for religious purposes. Accordingly, in *Acts* xx. 7, we are informed, that *the disciples* in *Troas came together on the first day of the week, to break bread;* and that *Paul preached unto them, continuing his speech until midnight.* But whence did these persons, thus separated, derive this agreement in their observance of the first day of the week? The only answer, which can be given to this question, is, *From the Inspiration which guided them both.* Had they been uninspired; their agreement in a case of this nature, where they acted independently of each other, would have proved, that they derived the doctrine, and the practice grounded on it, from a common source. Their character as inspired men, and Apostles, proves beyond debate, that the common source, from which they thus harmoniously derived a religious Institution, was God.

6. *The same doctrine is proved from the already cited passage,* Rev. i. 10; *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.*

From this declaration it is evident, that in, or about the year 96, when the Apocalypse was written and published, there was a day, known, and observed, by Christians, generally, as the Lord's day. This appellation was, I presume, derived from the passage, before quoted from the 118th Psalm. In which it is said concerning the day of Christ's resurrection, *This is the day, which the Lord hath made:* that is, hath made of a common into a holy day; or, in other words, consecrated to himself. But the day, pointed out in this passage, is the day on which Christ rose from the dead.

That this was in fact, the day, styled by St. John *the Lord's Day*, is unanswerably evident from the history of the Church: and it is equally evident, that the Sabbath, or holy rest, together with all the religious services pertaining to it, were celebrated by the Church on this day. Every one, who has read with attention the New Testament, must have observed, that there is no hint, as well as no precept, directing Christians to celebrate the seventh day as holy time. The ancient Christians, particularly the Jewish Christians, when they had occasion to preach to the *Jews*, or to assemble with them, entered into their synagogues on the seventh day, and undoubtedly worshipped with them in their manner; but there is not the least reason to believe, either from the Acts, or from the Epistles, that they ever assembled of their own accord, on that day, for religious services, in a regular, or customary manner.

Ignatius, a companion of the Apostles, says, in so many words, "Let us no more sabbatize;" that is, keep the Jewish Sabbath, "but let us keep the Lord's day, on which our *Life* arose."

Justin Martyr, who lived at the close of the first and the beginning of the second century, says, "On the day, called Sunday, is an assembly of all, who live in the city or country; and the memoirs of the Apostles, and the writings of the Prophets," that is,

the Old and New Testament, "are read." For this he assigns the reasons of the Christians; viz. "that it was the day on which the Creation of the world began, and on which Christ arose from the dead."

Irenæus, a disciple of *Polycarp*, the disciple of *St. John* himself, who lived in the second century, says, "On the Lord's day every one of us, Christians, keeps the Sabbath; meditating in the law," or Scriptures, "and rejoicing in the works of God."

Dyonysius, Bishop of *Corinth*, who lived in the time of *Irenæus*, that is, in the second century, says in his letter to the Church at *Rome*, "To-day we celebrate the Lord's day, when we read your Epistle to us."

Tertullian, who also lived in the second century, speaks of the Lord's day as a Christian solemnity.

Petavius declares, that "but one Lord's day was observed in the earliest times of the Church."

It is indeed true, that in that miserable forgery, which professes itself to have been written by the Apostles, and is styled, *The Apostolical Constitutions;* but which was plainly the work of some impostor, living in the latter end of the fourth, or the beginning of the fifth, century, certainly not earlier, it is directed, that Christians should keep both the Jewish Sabbath and the Lord's day, as religious festivals; and that every Sabbath, but one, in the year, and every Lord's day, should be observed in this manner. It is also true, that, in the fifth century, both these days were kept in this manner by Christians generally, except the Churches of *Rome*, and *Alexandria;* who did *not* observe the Jewish Sabbath as a religious day. This appears by the testimony of both *Socrates* and *Sozomen*. Concerning this subject *Petavius* declares, that "the most holy fathers agreed, that the Apostles never ordained any thing of this nature." He also remarks, that the council of *Laodicea*, which probably sat about the year 363, forbade in their 29th canon, that Christians should rest from labour on the Sabbath or Seventh day. For they say, "Christians ought not to *Judaize*, nor to rest on the Sabbath, that is, *the seventh* day; but preferring the Lord's day, to rest, if indeed it should be in their power, as Christians."*

From these observations it is plain, that, although in the fifth century many Christians had reverted to the observation of the *Jewish* Sabbath, while yet they universally celebrated the Lord's day; yet the practice, even in this period of miserable declension, was by no means universal. The Churches of *Rome* and *Alexandria* never adopted it at all; and others plainly adopted it, as they did a great multitude of other corruptions at the same time, merely from their own construction of the Scriptures. We can-

* Lardner.

not wonder at those, especially when we find among them celebrated ministers of religion, *who admitted the protection and invocation of Saints and Martyrs*, should admit any other corruption; and that they should construe those passages of Scripture, which speak of the Sabbath, as erroneously as they construed others.

7. *The same truth appears in this great fact; that God has perpetually and gloriously annexed his blessing to the Christian Sabbath.*

If this day be not divinely instituted; then God has suffered his Church to disuse, and annihilate, his own Institution, and substitute one, of mere human device, in its stead. Will this be believed? But this is not all: he has annexed the blessing, which he originally united to the Sabbath, instituted by himself, to that, which was the means of destroying it, and which was established by human authority merely. After requiring, that men should add nothing to his words, and forbidding them to diminish ought from them; after threatening the plagues, denounced in the Scriptures, to him, who should add unto the words which they contain; and declaring, that he would *take away out of the book of life the part of him*, who *should take away from the words written in the Scriptures:* can any man believe, that he would forsake, that he has forsaken, his own Institution; an Institution of this magnitude; an Institution, on which have depended, in all lands and ages, the observation, influence, and existence, of his holy Law? Can any man believe, that He who so dreadfully punished *Nadab* and *Abihu* for forsaking his own Institution, in a case of far inferior magnitude, and setting up one of their own in its stead, would not only *not punish, but abundantly and unceasingly bless*, the Christian Church, while perpetrating, and persisting in, iniquity, of exactly the same nature, and far greater in degree? The Christian, who can believe this, must be prepared to believe any thing.

Had men *known nothing concerning the Institution of God;* the charity of their fellow-men might be naturally enough extended to them, while employed in religiously commemorating Christ's resurrection. The appearance of piety in such a commemoration, and their freedom from the impiety of intruding upon a divine Institution, might induce others to think favourably of their conduct. But in the case in hand, the Institution was begun by the Apostles; men inspired; chosen followers of Christ; and the erectors of his kingdom in the world. If they sinned, they sinned wilfully, and in defiance of their inspiration. With *them*, however, the blessing began to be annexed to this day in a most wonderful and glorious manner. From *them* it has been uninterruptedly continued to the present time. To this day, under God, as a primary mean, mankind are indebted for all the Religion, which has been in the world from the days of the Apostles. If, then, the Christian Sabbath is not a divine Institution; God has made a device of man

a more powerful support to his spiritual kingdom, a more efficacious instrument of diffusing truth and righteousness, than most, perhaps than all, others: while, at the same time, he has, so far as I am able to discern, wholly neglected, and forgotten, a most solemn Institution of his own. Thus a human device has been a peculiar, if not a singular, means of accomplishing the greatest glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: and men, it would seem, will, in the end, *have whereof to glory before God.*

This blessing has been too evident, too uniform, and too long continued, to admit of a doubt; too great, and too wonderful, to be passed over in silence. On this day, the perfections of God, manifested in the amazing works of Creation and of Redemption, have, more than on all others, been solemnly, gratefully, and joyfully, remembered and celebrated. On this day, millions of the human race have been born unto God. On this day, Christians have ever found their prime blessings. From the Word and Ordinances of God, from the influences of the Holy Spirit, from the presence of Christ in his Church, Christians have derived, on this day, more than on all others, the most delightful views of the divine character, clear apprehensions of their own duty, lively devotion to the service of God, strength to overcome temptations, and glorious anticipations of immortality. Take this day from the Calendar of the Christian, and all that remains will be cloudy and cheerless. Religion will instantly decay. Ignorance, error, and vice, will immediately triumph; the sense of duty vanish; morals fade away; the acknowledgment, and even the remembrance, of God be far removed from mankind; the glad tidings of salvation cease to sound; and the communication between earth and heaven be cut off for ever.

SERMON CVII.

FOURTH COMMANDMENT.—OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

HEBREWS iv. 9.—*There remaineth, therefore, Rest to the people of God.*

IN the two preceding discourses, I have, according to the scheme originally proposed, endeavoured to prove *the Perpetual Establishment of the Sabbath, as a divine Institution;* and to show, that *the day, on which it is by divine appointment to be holden by the Christian Church, is the day of Christ's Resurrection.*

In the following discourse, I shall proceed *to consider the Objections, which have been made to this doctrine.* As all the important objections, within my knowledge, are adduced by the late Archdeacon *Paley*, it is my design to reply to this respectable writer in form: such a reply being, in my own apprehension, all that is necessary with respect to the subject at large.

The text I consider as a direct assertion, that *there is a Sabbath in the Christian Church, explained by the verse following to be founded on the fact, that Christ rested from his labours in the work of Redemption; as the seventh day Sabbath was founded on the fact, that God rested on that day from his labours in the work of Creation. For he, that hath entered into his rest, even he hath rested from his works, as God did from his* own. The word, translated *Rest*, in the text, is Σαββατισμος. *Ainsworth*, a man eminently qualified to judge of this subject, translates Ex. xvi. 23, thus: *This is that, which* JEHOVAH *hath spoken: To-morrow is the Sabbatism, the Sabbath of holiness, to* JEHOVAH. In the same manner he translates Ex. xxxi. 15, Lev. xxiii. 3, and xxv. 4. In commenting on Ex. xvi. 23, he says, "*Sabbatism, Rest:* that, is, Rest, or cessation. But as the Hebrew *Sabbath* is retained by the Holy Ghost, in the Greek Σαββατον, so the Hebrew *Shabbathon*, here used, is by the Apostle Σαββατισμος, in Heb. iv. 9." The verse ought therefore to be rendered, *There remaineth, therefore, a Sabbatism*, or Holy Sabbath *to the people of God:* and this day the following verse proves to be the day, on which Christ rose from the dead.

The reason, why I have not adduced this passage of Scripture, together with those immediately connected with it, in proof of the doctrine under debate, is, that a comment on a paragraph, so obscurely written, and demanding so particular an explanation, must be very long; and would probably be very tedious to many of my audience.

1. The first and great objection of *Dr. Paley* to the Perpetuity of the Sabbath is, that the account of its original Institution is

found in the following passage: Ex. xvi. 22—30. *And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man; and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: Bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you, to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning as Moses bade. And Moses said, Eat that to-day, for to-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my statutes and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.*

The argument, here, is wholly derived from this phraseology: *To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord. To-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord:* and, *The Lord hath given you the Sabbath.* In these expressions *Dr. Paley* thinks he finds the first Institution of the Sabbath. In my view, however, after examining long, and often, the arguments of this respectable Writer, they appear to lead to the contrary conclusion. It is to be observed, that the whole argument depends on *the first* of these passages; because, *that* being once introduced, the rest would, in the case supposed, follow it of course; and because they refer directly to it, and are grounded upon it.

As a preface to the answer, which I intend to make to this argument, I remark, that the words of *Moses* are addressed to *the Elders of Israel*, who had complained to him of the improper conduct of their countrymen, for gathering twice as much bread on the sixth day, as they customarily gathered on other days. As *Moses* had forbidden them to leave of it till morning; and undoubtedly by divine Inspiration; the Elders supposed their countrymen to have trespassed, in collecting this double quantity upon the sixth day. Upon this part of the story I observe,

1. *That the division of time into Weeks was perfectly known to the Israelites.* This is proved by the phrases, *the sixth day*, and *the seventh day;* obviously referring to the days of *the week*, and not to the days of *the month.* Now I ask, Whence had these people this scheme in dividing time, unless from the history of the Creation, traditionarily conveyed down to them? This tradition, it will be observed, could come to them from *Adam, through six persons: Methuselah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, and Amram.*

2. *Although in the fifth verse God informed Moses, that the Congregation should gather twice as much on the sixth day; it seems*

highly probable, if not absolutely certain, that Moses did not inform THEM: *for, we find, that the Elders, who would, I think, certainly have received this information first, were plainly ignorant of it.* The people, therefore, seem to have supposed the ensuing day to be the Sabbath, of their own accord; and for this reason to have ventured to gather a double quantity of manna, from an apprehension, that the labour would be improper, and unlawful, on that day. Some of them, indeed, went out, from a spirit of rebellion and unbelief, and probably under the influence of an idle curiosity, to learn whether the manna would descend on that day, contrary to the prediction of Moses, or not. But this fact affects not the argument in hand.

Let me now ask, *whether the first of these declarations of Moses, This is that, which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord, is the language of a man, speaking of a thing altogether new, and unheard of;* of a thing, totally different from all other things, hitherto known in the world; or *the language of a man referring to something already known,* and speaking to persons, who, although acquainted with the Institution itself, had an imperfect knowledge of the proper day, on which it was to be holden; and were, therefore, uncertain with respect to this point? Were two of us to appoint a future day of the month, (say the second of December) for the transaction of certain business; a third, who was present, would naturally observe, if such was the fact, that the second of December will be the Sabbath. Or were we conversing upon the same subject, *on the first of December,* the same person would naturally say, "To-morrow is the Sabbath." These, you will observe, are the very words of *Moses.* Here we are unmindful, and through forgetfulness ignorant, that the Sabbath is to take place on that day. Yet we are perfectly acquainted with the Institution, generally; and that we are acquainted with it, this phraseology is direct proof: because it springs from these very circumstances; and would, in the case stated, be used by all men.

But if the Institution was wholly unknown, would not the reply be made in terms equivalent to the following: "We cannot meet on the morrow, or the second of December, for this business: because the Legislature has by law forbidden all the inhabitants to do business on that day; and has required them to assemble for the worship of God, and to abstain from every secular pursuit." To this answer would naturally succeed inquiries concerning the fact; the time, and the end, of passing the law; the motives, which led to it; the terms, in which it was couched; its requisitions, and its penalties. No instance, it is presumed, can be found, in which the conversation concerning a new subject of this nature would be such, as is here recorded by *Moses;* or in which it would not be substantially such, as I have recited. On the contrary, the

conversation, in the case which I have supposed to be that of the *Israelites*, is always exactly that of *Moses*.

In this opinion I am established by the remarkable fact, that the *Israelites* make no inquiry concerning this supposed, novel Institution; although so eminently important, and so plain an object of rational curiosity. The Elders themselves, notwithstanding their zeal against the supposed transgression of the people, ask no questions, and make no reply. If the Institution was new, and now first made known to them; this conduct is unaccountable. But if they were acquainted with the Institution, and doubtful concerning the day, it was perfectly natural.

The reckoning of time, at this, as well as many preceding and succeeding periods, it is well known, was extremely lame and confused. The *Israelites*, with respect to this subject, labored under peculiar disadvantages. They had been long in a state of servitude; and were of course ignorant, distressed, and naturally inattentive to this and other subjects of a similar nature. A reckoning would, indeed, be kept among them, however ignorant. But it must almost necessarily be imperfect, doubtful, and disputed. Different opinions concerning time would of course prevail.

Should it be said, that the causes which I have specified, would make them forget the Institution itself: I answer, that other nations, as will be seen hereafter, did not forget it; but consecrated the seventh day to religious worship; although many, perhaps all, became ignorant of the day itself. We ourselves often forget the day of the month, and week; while yet we are possessed of the most exact reckoning of time, and a perfect calendar; and are reminded of our time by so many books, papers, and other means.

Dr. Paley lays much stress on the words, contained in *the third* declaration of *Moses*, which I have specified: *The Lord hath given you the Sabbath.* In the 23d verse, when the Elders had reported to him the supposed transgression of their countrymen, in gathering a double portion of manna on the sixth day of the week, he answers: *This is that which the Lord hath said; To-morrow is the Rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord:* that is, God declares to you, that the holy rest unto himself is to be holden on the morrow. *Bake that, which ye will bake, to-day; and seethe that, which ye will seethe; and that, which remaineth over, lay up for you, to be kept until the morning.* The next day he renewed the same monition; and informed them further, that there would be no manna on that day; nor on the seventh day, *at any future period.* They were, therefore, to gather it on six days of the week only; and on every sixth day to provide the necessary supply for the seventh.

Some of the people, however, went out to gather manna on that very day; but found none. Upon this, God says to *Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments? See, for that the Lord*

hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days. The words, *the Lord hath given you the Sabbath*, are perfectly explained by the original declaration of *Moses* on this subject, made the preceding day. *To-morrow is the rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the Lord.* This is the giving of the Sabbath, here referred to; and this, I flatter myself, has been shown to be something, widely different from originally instituting the Sabbath.

The obvious explanation of these words, here given, equally explains a passage in Ezekiel xx. 12, and another in Nehemiah ix. 14, quoted by *Dr. Paley* for the same purpose. The *former* of these is, *Moreover, also, I gave them my Sabbaths:* the *latter*, *Thou madest known unto them thy holy Sabbath.* If the passage in *Ezekiel* refers to the *Sabbath* at all; which may be doubted; it is merely a repetition of the words of *Moses*. If it refers to the various *fasts and feasts of the Jews*, frequently denominated sabbaths; it has no connexion with the subject. The latter of these passages accords more naturally, and obviously, with the account which has been here given, than with that of *Dr. Paley*. Neither of them, it is perfectly plain, furnishes the least additional support to his opinion.

Another argument for the same purpose is derived by this respectable writer from the following declaration, Ex. xxxi. 16, 17. *It*, that is, the Sabbath, *is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever.* The same thing is also mentioned by *Ezekiel* in nearly the same terms. Upon this *Dr. Paley* observes, "Now it does not seem easy to understand how the Sabbath could be a sign between God and the people of Israel, unless the observance of it was peculiar to that people, and designed to be so."

The only question of importance, here, is, whether the fact, that the Sabbath is made a sign between God and Israel, made it cease to be a memorial of the display of the divine perfections, accomplished in the Creation. If not; then the Sabbath still remained at that time, and remains now, such a memorial. But, I presume, neither *Dr. Paley* himself, nor any other man, would say, that God, in making the Sabbath a sign between him and *Israel*, intended to release them from commemorating, on that day, his perfections, thus displayed in the work of creation, and his own solemn commemoration of them, when he rested at the close of this work upon the seventh day. But if the *Israelites* were not released from this commemoration by the passage in question; the rest of mankind could be affected by it in no manner whatever.

The truth is, that the ordinance which made the Sabbath a sign to the Israelites was subsequent to the promulgation of the Decalogue; and cannot affect that law, even remotely; as I shall soon demonstrate. In the same manner the Sabbath was made a memorial of the deliverance of the *Israelites* from the bondage of *Egypt*, and a type of the promised rest in *Canaan*. These

were all merely additional uses of the Sabbath, to which it was happily applied, because they perfectly harmonized with its original design.

In Deuteronomy vi. 8, *Moses*, after reciting the Decalogue, and the summary of it contained in the two great commands of the Moral law, says to *Israel*, *Thou shalt bind them, for a sign, upon thine hand.* A sign which the Israelites, by the command of God, were to bind upon their hands, was a sign between God and them, in the same manner as was the Sabbath. Now I ask whether it would be proper to say, that "it does not seem easy to understand how the decalogue, and the two great commands in which it is summed up, could be a sign between God and the people of *Israel*, unless the observance of them was peculiar to that people, and designed to be so."

What was intended by making the Sabbath a sign between God and Israel is declared by God himself in Ezekiel xx. 12; *I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them; that they may know, that I am Jehovah, who sanctify them.* It will not be denied, that the whole human race are equally interested with the Israelites in this knowledge. All that was peculiar to them was this: they alone, for many ages, had, and it was foreseen by God that they would have, the knowledge in question; and would be the only medium of communicating it to other nations. The Sabbath, therefore, was so far peculiarly a sign to them, but is obviously in its nature, and necessarily, a sign also, in a general sense, of the same knowledge to every nation, afterwards acquainted with the Sabbath. From this very declaration in *Ezekiel*, in which the object of rendering the Sabbath a sign to the Israelites, is pointed out, it is clear that "the observance of it was not designed to be peculiar to that people," unless the knowledge of Jehovah was also to be perpetually confined to *them.*

Dr. Paley further observes, "If the sabbath be binding upon Christians; it must be binding as to the day, the duties, and the penalty: in none of which it is received."

It will be remembered, that the Sabbath, and the day on which it is kept, are separate parts of the Institution; so separate, that the Sabbath itself may be perpetual, and yet the day be changed, successively, through every part of the week. The Institution of the day I have already acknowledged to be no less obligatory, than that of the Sabbath itself; unless it can be fairly shown to have been changed by the same Authority. Whether this has, in fact, been shown in the preceding discourse, must be left for those who heard it, to determine.

With regard to *the duties* of the Sabbath, I shall only observe, that this point will be examined in a future discourse.

As to *the penalty*, it will be remembered, that it is not contained in the Decalogue; but is merely a part of the civil law, and internal police, of the *Jewish* nation. Still, it may be useful to try this

reasoning with other commands of the Decalogue. In *the two first precepts*, it is acknowledged, that we, as well as the Israelites, are forbidden to worship idols, or other Gods, beside Jehovah. Now it is well known that *the Israelites*, who disobeyed these commands, were by the law of *Moses* to be put to death. It is presumed, that *Dr. Paley* would not believe this penalty to be binding upon us; and that he would still acknowledge the commands themselves to be no less obligatory upon *us*, than upon *them*. It is presumed also, that he would acknowledge *the fifth command* to be equally binding upon all men. In Deut. xxi. 18—21, and in Prov. xxx. 17, it is required, that children, disobeying this command, shall be put to death. Would *Dr. Paley* acknowledge this penalty to be binding upon *us*? Or would he deny our obligation to obey the command?

II. *It is asserted by this writer, that Genesis* ii. 1—3, *does not contain an account of the original Institution of the Sabbath.*

This assertion he supports by the following reasons: "that the observation of the Sabbath is not mentioned in the history of the world, before the call of *Abraham:* that it is not mentioned in the history of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob;* which, he says, is in many parts sufficiently circumstantial and domestic: that in Exodus xvi. no intimation is given, that the Sabbath, then appointed, was only the revival of an ancient Institution, which had been neglected or forgotten: that no such neglect is imputed to the inhabitants of the old world, or to any part of the family of *Noah:* and that there is no record of any permission to dispense with the Institution, during the *Egyptian* bondage, or on any other public emergency."

With regard to *the last* of these reasons, I answer only, that there is no record of any neglect of the Institution, either during the *Egyptian* bondage, or during any other public emergency. During the *Babylonish* captivity, we have no record of any such permission, nor of any observance of the Sabbath. Yet, as *Nehemiah* and his companions plainly observed it after their return from that captivity, it is presumed, *Dr. Paley* will not deny, that it was observed by the Jewish nation during that whole period.

That no negligence of the Sabbath should be charged to the *Antediluvians*, to *Noah*, or to any others, in cases, where the Sabbath is not even mentioned, can occasion no surprise; and it is presumed, can furnish no argument, relative to this or any other question. It deserves, however, to be remarked as an answer to every observation, which can be made of this nature, that the first censure for any impropriety in the observation of the Sabbath, uttered concerning the *Israelites* in the Scriptures, is found in the prophet *Isaiah:* about seven hundred and sixty years before Christ, and seven hundred and thirty-one years after the events recorded in Exodus xvi. The second is found in *Ezekiel;* written about five hundred and ninety-three years before Christ, and eight hundred

and ninety-seven years after these events. Can it, then, be surprising, when we know from these very passages, that the *Israelites* merited not a little censure for their profanations of the Sabbath; and when we yet find these to be the first censures, cast upon them in the Scriptures; that *Noah*, his family, and the Antediluvians, should not be censured?

The *third* of these reasons cannot, after what has been said in the former part of this discourse, need any answer. I shall, therefore, direct the following observations to *the two remaining reasons*; perhaps with more propriety considered as *one*; viz. *the silence of the Scriptures concerning the observation of the Sabbath by those, who lived before the call of Abraham, and by the three first patriarchs.* Concerning this subject I observe,

In the first place, *If all these persons did in fact neglect, or forget, the Institution, it would not alter the case at all. The Institution of booths* is declared, in *Nehemiah* viii. 17, to have been neglected, and forgotten, from the time of *Joshua*, the son of *Nun*, until after *Nehemiah* and his companions returned from the captivity: a period of nine hundred and eighty years. Neither *Samuel*, *David*, *Solomon*, *Hezekiah*, nor *Josiah*, observed it: and let it be remembered, that no censure is cast upon them for their neglect; nor any hint given, that they were guilty of such neglect, until the close of this long period, nor even then was any other notice taken of this subject but what is contained in this declaration of *Nehemiah*. Yet *Nehemiah* revived this solemnity; and has declared it to be obligatory upon that generation, and upon those of succeeding ages, in the same manner as if it had never been disused.

2. *There is no reason to suppose, that this fact would have been mentioned, if the Sabbath had been exactly observed by the Patriarchs, and by all who preceded them.* If *Sabbaths*, in the plural, be supposed to denote the Sabbath; then the first mention of this subject, made after the time of *Moses*, occurs in 1 Chron. xxiii. 31, in the instructions of *David* to *Solomon* concerning building the temple, at the distance of near five hundred years. The same word occurs thrice in the same book: viz. in the 8th and 31st chapters: in the two former of these instances, as a repetition, or allusion to, the words of David; and both in the history of *Solomon*. The latter instance is in the history of *Hezekiah*, seven hundred and sixty-five years after the period above-mentioned. The same word occurs in *Isaiah*; about seven hundred and thirty years from that period. The word *Sabbath*, is mentioned five times in the history of the *Jewish* Church before the Captivity. *The first* of them is a mere note concerning *the business* of the *Kohathites*; which was *to prepare the shew bread every Sabbath.* The time, when it was written, was that of *David*; near five hundred years after this period. See 1 Chron. ix. 32. *The second* is the speech of the Shunamite's husband: *It is neither new moon, nor Sabbath*: not referring, in my opinion, to *the Sabbath* at all: al-

most six hundred years from the above period. *The third* is in 2 Kings xi.; a part of the speech of *Jehoiada* to the rulers of *Judah*. *A third part of you, that enter in on the Sabbath, shall even be keepers of the King's house; and two parts of all you, that go forth on the Sabbath*, even they shall be *keepers of the watch of the house of the Lord*. Immediately after this speech it is also subjoined, that *the rulers took every man his men, that were to come in on the Sabbath, with them, that should go out on the Sabbath, and they came to Jehoiada the priest*. These it will be remembered constitute but *a single instance* of mentioning the Sabbath; an instance occurring at the distance of more than six hundred years. Another instance occurs in the history of Ahaz; and is the following: *The covert for the Sabbath turned he from the house of the Lord, for the king of Assyria:* seven hundred and fifty-two years. The word is also mentioned in *Isaiah* lvi. lviii. and lxv. about seven hundred and eighty years. These are all the instances, in which the word occurs either in Prophecy, or History, from the time of *Moses* till after the return of the captivity: a period of one thousand years.

Of this account it is to be observed,

First; That the word, *sabbaths*, in the plural, is mentioned four times in the history of the *Jewish* Church, and twice in the prophecy of *Isaiah*, within a period of seven hundred and eighty years. The first, second, and third, occurring, incidentally, in the mention of the duty of the priests in the orders of *David:* the second, a repetition of them by *Solomon:* the third, in an account of their execution. These, together, really constitute but one instance. The fourth occurs, incidentally also, in a sentence, giving in almost the same words, an account of the same duty of the priests in the time of *Hezekiah*. The fifth is a censure of the *Jews* for the pollution of the new moons and sabbaths, uttered by the prophet *Isaiah*. The three first of these instances occur at the distance of about five hundred years, the others between seven and eight hundred from the time of the supposed institution. In but one of these, and that the last, is there any thing like an account of the manner, in which the Sabbath was kept, or neglected. All the rest are merely incidental; and teach us nothing more, than that sabbaths were in existence, and were involved in the *Jewish* ritual.

Secondly; As *the Sabbath* appears to be regularly distinguished from *sabbaths;* and as Sabbaths are regularly joined with the *new moons*, and other holidays of the Jews, which *the Sabbath* never is; it is clear to me, that *the Sabbath* is not alluded to in any of these instances.

Thirdly; The phrase, *The Sabbath*, occurs in *three instances*, (calling those in the account of *Jehoiada* one) in the history of the *Jewish* Church, before the captivity: all of them, however, entirely incidental; and containing no account of the Sabbath as an Institution; nor of the observance of it; nor of the neglect. This is

all, which is said of it before the return from the *Babylonish* Captivity, except what is said by the Prophet *Isaiah:* and there is but a single passage in this Prophet, in which this phrase is used with reference to the times of the *Jewish* dispensation.

We are thus come to this conclusion, that there are but *five passages*, in which *the Sabbath* is mentioned in the *Jewish* writings, from the time of *Moses* to the return of the captivity: one thousand years. *Two* of them are found in prophecy, and *three* of them in their history. The first of these is mentioned about five hundred years, the second six hundred, and the third seven hundred and fifty-two; and the two remaining ones, which are found in prophecy, near eight hundred; from the time of the supposed Institution.

Now let me ask, Can any person wonder, that in an account so summary, as the history of the three first *Jewish* patriarchs, there should be no mention of the Sabbath; when, also, during a period of about five hundred years, containing the histories of *Joshua*, of the Judges, particularly *Samuel*, and of *Saul*, it is not once mentioned? The question certainly cannot need an answer. The only wonder is, that so sensible a writer should have thought this an argument.

3. *God himself has, I apprehend, declared, that the Sabbath was instituted at this time.*

For in the first place, this is the true and only rational interpretation of the second of Genesis. *Dr. Paley* supposes, that the words of the historian: *And God rested on the seventh day from all the work, which he had made; and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his works, which God created and made;* declare only *the reasons*, for which God blessed and sanctified the Sabbath, and not the *time*, at which this was done; and that *it was mentioned at this time, only on account of its connexion with the subject, and not because the blessing and sanctification took place at this period.* To this I answer, *Moses* has written this story exactly in the manner, in which he has written the whole history of the creation, paradisiacal state, and the apostacy: nay, almost the whole of the history, contained in the book of Genesis. There is as much reason to believe, that the Sabbath was blessed and sanctified at this time, from the manner, in which the story is written, as there is to believe, that our first parents were turned out of Paradise before the birth of *Cain and Abel.* The order of time is, I apprehend, exactly observed in the history, except where the historian has taken up again a particular part of the history, for the purpose of detailing it, and has, for this end, interrupted the general course of his narrative. Of the justice of this observation the bare reading of the story will, I think, convince any person, who has not a pre-conceived opinion to support.

What is thus sufficiently evident from the narrative, God appears to me to have decided in the following words of the text: *For*

in six days the Lord made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that in them is; and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed, or sanctified, *it*. Here, God, repeating the very words of the narrative, declares, that he had already blessed and sanctified the Sabbath, at some time preceding that, at which this command was promulgated. The Sabbath, therefore, was blessed and sanctified before this command was given. That this was not done at the time, when Dr. Paley supposes the Sabbath to have been instituted, nor at any period between the first Sabbath, and the giving of the law, seems to me clear from this; that there is not a single hint given of the subject, either at the time of the supposed Institution, or in any other part of the Mosaic dispensation, except that in the second of Genesis. That the blessing was then given must, I think, be concluded, because God himself, relating this great transaction, adopts the same language; and says, *Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it*. That the blessing of the Sabbath was a past transaction, is unquestionable. There is no hint concerning the existence of it, but in these two instances: and in both these it is immediately connected with God's finishing the Creation, and resting on the seventh day.

4. *That it was instituted at the beginning is evident from the fact, that other nations, who could not have derived it from Moses, regarded the seventh day as holy.*

Hesiod says, "Εβδομον ἱερον ἡμαρ:" "The seventh day is holy."

Homer and *Callimachus* give it the same title.

Theophilus of *Antioch*, says concerning the seventh day, "The day, which all mankind celebrate."

Porphyry says, "The *Phœnicians* consecrated one day in seven as holy."

Linus says, "A seventh day is observed among saints, or holy people."

Lucian says, "The seventh day is given to school-boys as a holy day."

Eusebius says, "Almost all the philosophers, and poets, acknowledge the seventh day as holy."

Clemens Alexandrinus says, "The *Greeks*, as well as the *Hebrews*, observe the seventh day as holy."

Josephus says, "No city of *Greeks*, or barbarians, can be found, which does not acknowledge a seventh-day's rest from labour."

Philo says, "The seventh day, is a festival to every nation."

Tibullus says, "The seventh day, which is kept holy by the *Jews*, is also a festival of the *Roman* women."

The several nations, here referred to, cannot, it is plain, have fallen upon this practice by chance. It is certain, they did not derive it from the *Jews*. It follows, therefore, that they received

it by tradition from a common source: and that source must have been *Noah* and his family.

III. To the argument from the insertion of this command in the decalogue, *Dr. Paley* answers, that *the distinction between positive and moral precepts*, or in his language, between *positive and natural duties, was unknown to the simplicity of ancient language*: meaning, I suppose, *that it was unknown to the ancients, and among others, to Moses*: otherwise I cannot see how the observation is applicable to the question.

I confess myself surprised at this answer. Did not God understand this distinction, when he wrote the decalogue? Did he not know, that this distinction would afterwards be made, and understood, in all its influence? Was not the decalogue written, for all who should read the Scriptures? Was it not so written, as to be adapted to the use of all, for whom it was written? Did not God discern, that this distinction was founded in the nature of things; and did he not foresee, that although the *Israelites* should not perceive it during any period of their national existence, yet it still would be perceived by innumerable others of mankind? Did he not provide effectually for this fact, whenever it should happen; and for all the difficulties, and doubts, which might arise from the want of such a distinction?

From this observation, and several others, *Dr. Paley* appears to consider the decalogue as written by *Moses* in the same manner as the other parts of the Pentateuch; and as having no more authority, than the civil and ceremonial law of the *Israelites*; unless where this authority is discernible in the nature of the commands themselves. As this opinion appears not only erroneous, but dangerous, I shall oppose it with the following reasons.

First; The Law of the Israelites, both Civil and Ceremonial, is distinguished from the Decalogue, in this great particular: *that* was written by *Moses* in a book: *this* was first spoken by the voice of God, and then twice written by his finger on tables of stone, amid all the awful splendours of Mount *Sinai*.

Secondly; *Moses*, after reciting the decalogue in Deuteronomy v. immediately subjoins these words: *The Lord spake unto all your assembly in the Mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud and the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them on two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me. And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire) that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders: and ye said, Behold, the Lord, our God, hath shewed us his glory, and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. We have seen, this day, that God doth talk with man; and he liveth. Now, therefore, why should we die? for this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of the Lord, our God, any more, we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, that hath*

heard the voice of the living God, speaking out of the midst of the fire, and hath lived?

To this petition God consented; and promised to deliver his remaining precepts to *Moses*, and through him to *Israel*. Why was this distinction made? Why was the Decalogue spoken by the voice, and written by the finger, of God? and why, in the emphatical language of *Moses*, did *he add no more?* The only reason which can be alleged, is the transcendent dignity and importance of these commands. The view which *Moses* himself had of the total distinction between the decalogue, and the rest of the law written by him, is evident from this fact, that he commanded the *Israelites* to write them plainly, after they had passed over *Jordan*, upon great stones, plastered with plaster, and set up by the Congregation near the altar, which they were directed to build.* Why were they thus distinguished here?

Thirdly; Christ has distinguished them in a similar manner. When the young Ruler came to Christ, and asked *what good thing he should do, that he might have eternal life;* Christ said to him, *Thou knowest the Commandments.* The young man asked *which.* Christ, in reply, repeated five of the Commands in the second table, and the summary which contains them all. This shows beyond a doubt, that *the Commandments* was a name appropriated to the Decalogue; and denoted the same superiority to all other commands, as the name, *the Bible*, or *the Book*, denotes with respect to all other books.

Again; Christ, in answer to the Scribe, who asked him, *Which is the first and great Commandment*, recites the two great commands, which *Moses* had made the sum of the Decalogue; and adds, *On these two Commands hang all the law and the Prophets.* In other words, *On these two Commands is suspended the whole volume of the Old Testament.* What can be a stronger testimony of the superiority of the decalogue to every other part of that volume?

Fourthly; *St. Paul*, Rom. xiii. 9, says, *For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying; namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Here, the Apostle, after reciting five of the commands, contained in the second table of the Decalogue, adds, *If there be any other commandment.* Is not this direct proof, that he regarded the Decalogue as containing all those which were by way of eminence *the commandments of God*, and as separated by a broad line of distinction from every other precept?

Fifthly; It is well known, that the *Jews* always considered the Decalogue as entirely separated from every other part of the Old

* See Kennicott's Dissertations.

Testament. The prophets, who succeeded *Moses*, did nothing, as moral teachers, but explain and enforce it. Christ declared, that *sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than one jot, or one tittle, of this law shall pass, until all be fulfilled.* The Apostles have enforced no other precepts, as obligatory upon Christians. The *Jews* have, at this day, these commands written out in large letters, and hung up in their Synagogues, as solemn monitors to all, who enter them, of their duty. In a manner, correspondent with this, have they ever been regarded by Christians. They are at this day proverbially known by the name of *the Ten Commandments*, and *the Moral Law.*

St. Paul, in a passage which ought not to be omitted on this occasion, Eph. vi. 1—3, reciting the fifth command, says, *This is the first commandment with promise.* But God had given to *Noah*, to *Abraham*, to *Jacob*, to *Moses*, and to the *Israelites*, many commands, and annexed to them many promises, before the Law was delivered from Mount *Sinai*. In what sense, then, was the fifth command *the first, to which a promise was annexed?* Plainly in this sense only; that it is the first in the Decalogue, which has this mark of distinction. In the eye of *St. Paul*, therefore, the Decalogue contained all those which he thought proper to call *the Commandments;* and was, in his view, of a character totally distinct, and totally superior to every other part of the Old Testament.

As the Apostle recites this command to the *Ephesians*, who were Gentiles, as obligatory on them no less than on the Jews; it is clear, that the whole Decalogue, unless some part of it has been plainly disannulled, is entirely obligatory on Christians. Had there been any distinction in this respect between the different precepts of this law; *St. Paul* must, it would seem, have made it on this occasion. He would, at least, have made it somewhere; and not have left so important a subject without a single note of illustration.

IV. *Dr. Paley says, that St. Paul evidently appears to consider the Sabbath as a part of the Jewish ritual, and not binding upon Christians, as such: Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.* Col. ii. 16, 17.

To this observation, I answer, first, that this passage refers not in any sense to the Sabbath; but merely to the ordinary holidays of the Jews. The burden of proving the contrary lies upon the disciples of *Dr. Paley.*

Secondly; If this be denied; I assert, that it refers to the seventh day only, and not at all to the Christian Sabbath. Until the contrary is proved, I shall consider this answer as sufficient; especially, as the Christian Sabbath is not in the Scriptures, and was

not by the primitive Church, called *the Sabbath;* but *the first day of the week*, and *the Lord's day.*

V. The same writer says, *that the observation of the Sabbath was not one of the articles, enjoined by the Apostles, in Acts* xv. *upon the Christian Gentiles.*

I answer; Neither was abstinence from *theft*, *murder*, *lying*, *coveting*, *profaneness*, or *idolatry.*

VI. Dr. Paley asserts that *the observation of the Sabbath is not expressly enjoined in the New Testament.*

To this I answer, first, that the text is in my own view an explicit injunction of this duty. But as this opinion has been contested; as the paragraph, in which it is contained, is confessedly obscure; it would require one whole discourse of this nature to consider it sufficiently; and as the text was written many years after the Christian Sabbath was effectually established; I observe,

Secondly; That the Christian Sabbath was originally introduced into the Church much more successfully, and happily, than it could have been done by an express injunction.

In order to judge of this subject, it is necessary to bring up to our view the situation of those, to whom the Gospel was first preached. These were all Jews; intensely bigoted to every part of their religion, and peculiarly to their Sabbath. The day had been appointed by God himself; and was acknowledged to be divinely appointed, by Christ and his Apostles. The experiment of interfering with the feelings of the *Jews* concerning the Sabbath, even in the most lawful manner, had been sufficiently tried by Christ to discourage the Apostles from every unnecessary attempt of this nature. Accordingly, the Apostles pursued a peaceful and unobjectionable, method. They celebrated, at times, and probably always, the *Jewish* Sabbath, when they were among *Jews*. The *Jews* at the same time, without any objection, yielded to their example, and authority, in celebrating the Christian worship on the day of Christ's resurrection. They were circumcised; but they were also willingly baptized. They celebrated the Passover; but willingly added to it the Lord's Supper. They prayed in the temple; but they willingly united, also, in the prayers and praises of Christian assemblies, holden in private houses, or in the fields. While the Jewish service was neither attacked, nor neglected, they made not the least objection to that of the Christian Church. In this manner, all these ordinances grew into use, veneration, and habit; and, in the end, gained such a possession of the mind, and such a strength of authority, as could neither be overthrown, nor weakened.

When the Apostles came to declare in form, that the Jewish worship was to cease; the minds of the Church were so well prepared to receive this declaration, that it was carried into a general execution. Difficulties, and divisions, arose, indeed, about

this subject in several Churches; particularly about circumcision: and produced a course of serious contention. What would have been the case, had this part of the system been begun at an earlier period?

About the Christian Sabbath no dispute appears to have existed, during the three first centuries. All the Churches appear to have adopted it, and to have neglected the Jewish Sabbath, without any difficulty. Was not this method of introducing so important a change dictated by true wisdom; and a better method than any other?

The example of the Apostles is an example to all Christians. Were we, then, to give up the point, contested in the objection; we have still such a law in this Example; and so efficacious that probably no doctrine has been more generally received, than that of the Christian Sabbath, and no duty more generally performed, than the observation of it, down to the present time.

The absolute necessity of establishing the doctrines and duties of Christianity among the Jews, in the infancy of the Church, has been shown in a former discourse. I shall only add, that it seems impossible to have introduced among that people the Christian Sabbath in any other manner, than that which was adopted by the Apostles, unless their whole character had been miraculously changed.

SERMON CVIII.

FOURTH COMMANDMENT.—THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SABBATH IS TO BE OBSERVED.

ISAIAH lviii. 13, 14.—*If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a Delight, the Holy of the Lord, Honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob, thy Father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*

IN the first of the discourses, which I have delivered concerning the fourth Command, I proposed,

I. *To consider the Perpetual Establishment of the Sabbath;* and,

II. *The Manner, in which it is to be observed.*

The former of these doctrines, together with the objections against it, has been made the subject of the three preceding sermons. The latter shall be the theme of the present discourse.

The text is the most minute, and perfect summary of the duties, incumbent on mankind with respect to this holy day, which is contained in the Scriptures. It is a prediction to the *Jews*, announcing, that if they will perform these duties, God will greatly prosper them with spiritual and temporal blessings, in the land of their fathers. In my own opinion, it especially respects a period, yet to come. In examining this subject, I shall endeavour,

I. *To point out the Nature, and Extent, of these duties;* and,

II. *To show that they are binding upon us.*

I. *I shall endeavour to point out the Nature, and Extent, of these duties.*

In examining this subject, I shall adopt the scheme of the text; and mention,

1. *The things, from which we are to abstain;* and,

2. *The things which we are to perform.*

1. *We are bound to abstain from sin, in thought, conversation, and conduct.*

All, who read the Gospel, know, or may know, perfectly, that sin may be as easily, and as extensively, committed in thought, as in word, or action; and that the real seat of sin is in the heart. With the reformation of our hearts, then, we are always to begin our duty. We may as easily, and grossly, profane the Sabbath, so far as ourselves only are concerned, by thoughts, which are unsuited to its nature, as we can by any actions whatever. If our minds are intent on our business, or our pleasures; if our affec-

tions wander after them; if we are cold, or lukewarm, with respect to our religious duties; if we are negligent of a serious and cordial attention to them; if we regard with impatience the interruption, occasioned to our secular concerns; if we wish the institution had not been appointed, or the time, in which it is to be kept, lessened; then, plainly, we do not *esteem the Sabbath a Delight*, nor abstain from *finding our own pleasure*. So long as this is the state of our thoughts; all our outward conformity to this *precept*; (for such is really the nature of the text) will be merely hypocritical. Every *oblation* from such a mind will be *vain*; and all its *incense an abomination*. *The Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies*, among persons who act in this manner, will be such, as *God cannot away with*; and their solemn *meeting* will be *iniquity*.

The heart gives birth to all the movements of *the tongue*. We profane the Sabbath, whenever we employ the time in *Worldly Conversation*. Such conversation is, in the text, denoted by the phrase, *speaking thine own words: thine own* being supplied by the translators. I think this supplement rational; since in the two preceding clauses we find *doing* THINE OWN *ways*, and *finding thine own pleasure*. Bishop *Lowth*, from similar phraseology in the ninth verse, supposes it should be *vain words*. The meaning, however, will differ immaterially.

Such conversation is, like our thoughts, directed indifferently to subjects of business, and of pleasure; and in both cases the Sabbath is subverted, and so far as this conversation extends, is changed from a holy, into a secular, day. God is robbed of his rights, and of his service: and we are prevented from attaining, and from a disposition to attain, the holiness, which is indispensable to salvation.

There is no way, in which the Sabbath is more easily, more insensibly, more frequently, and more fatally violated, than this. Temptations to it are always at hand. The transgression always seems a small one; usually a dubious one at the worst; and, often, no transgression at all. Multitudes of persons, of sober and well-meaning dispositions, nay, multitudes, as there is but too much reason to fear, of professing Christians, beginning with religious subjects, slide imperceptibly towards those, which are considered as moral in such a degree, as scarcely to differ from religious ones; thence to secular themes, bordering upon these; and thence to mere matters of business, or amusement. Such persons, before they are aware, find themselves occupied in conversing about the affairs of the neighbourhood; the strangers, who are at Church; the new dresses; fashions; business; diversions; news, and politics. To these they are led by *mere worldly conversation* concerning the prayers; the psalmody; or the sermon; as having been well or ill devised, written, spoken, or performed; by a history, merely secular, of the sickness and deaths in the neighbourhood, or elsewhere, or of the dangerous or fatal accidents, which

have lately happened; the state of the weather; the season; the crops; the prospects; the affairs of the family; and by innumerable other things of a similar nature. The next step is, ordinarily, an habitual employment of this holy day in open, cool, and self-satisfied, conversation about business; schemes of worldly pursuits; bargains; gains, and losses. It is not to be understood, that *Christians* go all these lengths. It is my real belief, however, that they go much farther, than they can justify; and fail, in this manner, of their duty; their improvement in the Christian life; their proper exemplariness of character; the evidence of their piety, which would spring from these sources; the hope, which it would inspire; the peace, which would accompany them; and the joy, in which they would delightfully terminate. Many sober men, however, who but for this very conduct might probably become Christians, go all these lengths; and thus lose, insensibly, their tenderness of conscience; their soberness of mind; and their desire, as well as their hope, of eternal life. Men less well-principled start, originally, at *the end* of this career; and thus annihilate the Sabbath at once: bidding, without anxiety, a final adieu to the Sabbath itself, and to its rich, exalted, and immortal blessings.

The profanation of the Sabbath by Actions is seen, and acknowledged, by all decent men, who acknowledge it as a day, consecrated by God to himself. Actions are so open to the view of mankind; are so definitive a proof of the disposition; and, when violations of a known rule of duty, constitute so gross a proof of impiety; that all doubts concerning the true construction, to be given of them, vanish whenever they appear. The common and favourite modes of profaning the Sabbath, in this way, are spending our time in dress; in ministering to a luxurious appetite; in walking, or riding, for amusement; in writing letters of friendship; in visiting; and in reading books, which are not of a religious, but merely of a decent, character; and, ultimately, those which are formed to be the means of amusement and sport. The end of this progress, generally esteemed more gross, though perhaps in many instances not more, and in others less, sinful; is the devotion of this sacred day to downright business. Persons, who go this length, occupy the time in writing letters of business; posting their accounts; visiting post-offices; making bargains; transmitting money to their correspondents; going or sending to markets; making journeys, at first with, and afterwards without, pretences of necessity; and, ultimately labouring openly in the ordinary employments of life. This is what is called in the text *doing our own ways*. *A man's way*, in scriptural language, is the customary course of his life.

All these things, whether existing in thought, word, or action, are called *our own*, in contradistinction to *those which are God's*: that is, to those, which are required of us by God: and every one of them is prohibited in the text.

2. *We are required to abstain from Idleness.*

Although the Sabbath is never to be spent in secular business, or amusement; it is still to be, invariably, a day of industrious exertion. There are some persons, who feel too much regard to the dictates of their consciences, to public opinion, to the commands of God, or to all of them, to consume the Sabbath in business, or amusement. Still, having no relish for the duties of the day, they spend it in idleness: satisfied with abstaining from those, which they esteem the grosser, and more direct, violations of this divine Institution. Accordingly, they lounge about their houses, gardens, or farms; and waste the season of salvation in sloth, sleep, or such a course of existence as resembles that of the oyster: a state, bordering upon the line which separates animated beings from those which are inanimate. This course of conduct is an annihilation of the Sabbath; the death of the day; and a frustration of all the designs, and blessings, of God, connected with this heavenly Institution. The Sabbath was intended to be the means of honouring God, and of saving the souls of men. But idleness is always dishonourable to God, and hostile to the salvation of the soul. Both of these great objects are accomplished by *him* only, who is *not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*

3. *We are bound to abstain, with peculiar caution, from acknowledged sins upon this holy day.*

The abstinence, which I have hitherto specified, regards business and amusement, ordinarily lawful on other days. From that conduct, and those thoughts, which are *universally* sinful, we are bound to abstain, with peculiar care, upon the Sabbath; because, then, they are peculiarly henious. The sacred nature of this day, and the solemn consecration of it by God to himself, together with all the advantages, which we enjoy for religious instruction, and for all the duties of piety, furnish such a body of motives to our abstinence from sin, as cannot be resisted without peculiar guilt. Every sin, committed upon this day, is aggravated by the fact, that we have resisted these motives. At the same time, we are, by its very nature, so withdrawn from the world, so secured against temptation, and so much at leisure for solemn meditation, and for the establishment of firm resolutions of obedience in our minds, that, if we sin upon this day, we sin with fewer inducements to the iniquity, than upon other occasions. He, who indulges his wickedness on the Sabbath, will be in danger of rioting in it on the other days of the week.

It hardly needs to be remarked, that sinful ways are peculiarly *our own*, and eminently opposed to those, which are required by God.

In all the above recited particulars, those, who are guilty of them, openly violate the law of God; squander the accepted time; waste, and abuse, the means of grace; and lessen, Sabbath by Sabbath, their hopes of eternal life.

The Duties which we are to perform, are, generally, all the various offices of Religion. Good men, in ancient times, entered, on the Sabbath day, into the house of the Lord with praise and prayer. The Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, were *read in the Synagogues every Sabbath day.* They *feared God in the assembly of his saints: they praised him for his mighty acts; uttered abundantly the memory of his great goodness; and sung of his righteousness. They went on from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appearing before God.* They esteemed *a day in his courts as better than a thousand. Their souls longed, yea, even fainted, for the courts of the Lord; their heart and their flesh cried out for the living God.* Accordingly, *the Lord God was* to them *a sun, and a shield. He gave* them *grace and glory; and withheld from them no good thing.* In the same manner the early Christians *esteemed the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord honourable.* In the times of the Apostles, *they continued in fellowship, in prayer, and in breaking of bread.* They sung *psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.* They prophesied; taught the doctrines of the Scriptures; uttered, and interpreted, Revelation; and collected alms for such saints as were in peculiar circumstances of distress. All these examples abundantly show us, that good men, during the ages of Inspiration, steadily accorded, and thought it their duty to accord, with the requisitions, contained in the text. What was *their* duty is *ours.* All these solemn services, therefore, and others connected with them, it is incumbent on us to perform *in spirit, and in truth.* We are *to join ourselves to the Lord, to serve him,* according to the prediction of *Isaiah* concerning us, and the other Gentiles; *to love the name of the Lord; to keep the Sabbath from polluting it; and to take hold of his covenant.* Particularly,

1. *We are to perform all the duties of Public Worship.*

The Sabbath, as has been observed, was originally appointed for the commemoration of the divine glory, manifested in creating the world; and for the attainment, and improvement, of holiness in man. The manner, in which we should commemorate the glory of God in the work of Creation, on this day, is sufficiently taught us by the manner, in which the first Sabbath was celebrated. Then, we are informed, *the Morning Stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy.* In the same manner was the work of the New Creation, and the divine glory displayed in it, celebrated by the same illustrious beings, according to the prophetical account, given in the sixty-eighth Psalm, of this wonderful event: an account, expressly applied to it by the Apostle *Paul* in the third chapter of the Epistle to the *Ephesians. The Chariots of God are twenty thousand; even thousands of Angels. The Lord is among them, as in Sinai; as in the holy place.* The very hymn, which they sung, seems to be transmitted to us in the following words: *Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou*

hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also; that the Lord God might dwell among them.

The manner, in which holiness and salvation are to be obtained, is every where taught in the Gospel. *The truth* of God, in the hands of the divine Spirit, is the great instrument, by which we are *made free from the bondage of corruption*. *Faith*, we know, *cometh by hearing; and hearing, by the Word of God*. This Word is, therefore, to be faithfully explained, and enforced, by the Preacher; and faithfully received by those who hear him. The prayers, and the praises, of every religious assembly, are to spring from the heart; and are to ascend up before the throne of infinite mercy, with dependence, with confidence, with love, with reverence, with gratitude, with hope, and with joy. Our prayers, and our praises, are also to be presented in the name of Christ, as the great and glorious *Propitiation for the sins of men*, and *the true and living way* of access to God. They are to be presented with faith in his name; *that faith* which occupies the whole heart, and alone interests us in the blessings of Redemption.

Christians, at the same time, are to unite in the administration, and celebration, of the Evangelical ordinances; Baptism and the Lord's Supper: and are thus in a peculiar and most affecting manner to commemorate the glory of Christ, manifested in the wonderful work of the new Creation.

All these *things* are to *be done decently, and in order*. At the same time, they are to be performed with plainness, simplicity, and no unnecessary rites. The Jewish worship was intended by its ceremonious magnificence to strike the imagination during the early and ignorant periods of society. To this end it was perfectly fitted. All its services were calculated to affect the senses in the deepest manner, and to find, through them, access to the heart. The Gospel, on the contrary, is addressed directly to the Understanding; and makes its way to the heart by means of the power of Conscience. Unnecessary rites are, here, both useless and noxious: since they allure the thoughts away from the doctrines and precepts, which are inculcated, to the ceremonies by which they are surrounded. In this manner, the spiritual worship of the Gospel is ever in danger of becoming a mere *bodily exercise*, unprofitable in itself, and destructive of piety. The ceremonies of the Romish Church exterminated its devotion; and became, extensively, the cause, as well as the effect, of that corruption, which by men of real religion has been justly regarded as a prodigy.

2. *On this holy day, also, we are bound to perform the various Private duties of Religion.*

The worship of the family, and that of the closet, are the duty of all families, and of all individuals, every day they live. Equally is it the duty of all men to spend a part of every day in self-examination; in religious meditation; and in contemplation on the

perfections and works of God, on the character of Christ and the wonders of Redemption. The Scriptures especially, and other religious books generally, are to be read, pondered, and cordially received. The amendment of the soul, and victory over sin and temptation, are to be planned, resolved on, and achieved. We are to humble ourselves before God; to devote ourselves anew to his service; to cherish the duties of religion; and universally to cultivate the Christian character.

At the same time, children and servants are to be carefully instructed in the great and plain doctrines and duties of religion; to be restrained, in the same manner as ourselves, from all worldly pursuits; and to be presented by us with such persuasive examples of piety, as may engage them to reverence, and embrace, the Gospel.

Universally, our time, our thoughts, our conversation, and our actions, are all to be devoted to God. This, indeed, is, in a sense, true of every day. But on other days it is our duty to labour in our worldly business; and, while our thoughts are engaged by pursuits of this nature, it is impossible that they should be also engaged by religious subjects with sufficient intenseness, and constancy, to fulfil all the demands, either of our interest, or of our duty. On the Sabbath, we are withdrawn from all worldly pursuits. A solemn pause is made in the business of life. A happy season of leisure is furnished to us for obtaining our salvation. Then no worldly business is to intrude; no worldly pleasure to solicit; no worldly thought to interfere. The holy nature of the day, and the peculiarly solemn nature of its services, conspire, with eminent felicity, to render all the duties, which have been specified, easy, undisturbed, solemn, impressive, and profitable. This, then, is to be carefully seized, and anxiously husbanded, as a golden opportunity for performing them all.

3. *The Sabbath is to be employed, so far as circumstances demand, in performing works of Necessity and Mercy.*

Our authority for this assertion is complete in the declaration of God: *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.* In the illustrations of this precept by our Saviour and in his example, it is equally complete. What these works are, beyond the direct import of this example, we are to judge as carefully and conscientiously as we can. Generally, it is to be observed, that as little of our time, as the nature of the case demands, is to be employed in these works; and the remainder to be devoted to those duties of Religion, which were the original objects of the Sabbath. Wherever the time required is so great, as to be disproportioned to the value of the necessity in question; it is to be given up. That necessary work, which requires but a moment, may be lawful; when it would become unlawful, if it required an hour. All works, both of necessity and mercy, are to be regarded as Duties, which we are bound

to perform; and never as indulgencies, which we are permitted to take.

The Time, at which the peculiar duties of the Sabbath are to commence is, in my opinion, the time, when darkness commences on the evening of Saturday. For this opinion, the following reasons may be alleged.

First; *The natural day commenced with darkness.* After God had created the chaos, darkness rested upon it for a certain period. This darkness, and the light which succeeded it, are declared to have constituted *the first day.* In the same manner, are reckoned the five succeeding days of the Creation.

Secondly; *The Sabbath, at its original institution, was a natural day.* This is clear, because we are told, that *God rested the seventh day:* and from the manner, in which the six preceding days were reckoned, we have the fullest proof, that He, who by his own choice reckoned *them* in this manner, reckoned *the seventh day* in the same manner.

Thirdly; *When the Sabbath was renewedly enjoined upon the Israelites; it was required to be kept as a Natural day.* This we know, because no alteration of the original Institution is specified in the fourth command; and because, in Lev. xxiii. 32, God says to that people concerning the great day of Atonement, *From even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath.*

Fourthly; *The Jewish Sabbath commenced with the darkness; or with the time, which we denote by the word, Candle-lighting.* This is evident from *Nehem.* xiii. 19, *And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath,* &c. It is here evident, that the Sabbath had not commenced on Friday evening, when the gates of Jerusalem *began* to be dark; or, in our customary language, when *the dusk of the evening commenced* in that city. The Sabbath also, *as a natural day,* began originally at the same time: the first day of the Creation having commenced with absolute darkness. The time of darkness, to us, is the time, when we can no longer see, so as to transact business by the light of the sun.

Fifthly; *The Christian Sabbath is the first day of the week; and a natural day; because there is no hint given us, in the New Testament, of any alteration made, or to be made in this respect.* *Dr. Macknight* informs us that the ancient Christians began their Sabbath on the evening of Saturday. Some Christians have supposed, that *the time, when our Lord arose from the dead, is that, at which the present Sabbath ought to be begun.* This is evidently an error; because *that time is not declared in the New Testament, and therefore cannot be known by us.* Accordingly these Christians begin the Sabbath *at midnight:* a time of human appointment merely. This seems to me unwarrantable.

II. *I shall now attempt to show, that the Duties of the Sabbath are all binding upon us.*

On this subject I observe,

1. *That the example of God in resting from his work of Creation, and of Christ in resting from the work of Redemption, is authoritatively binding upon us; and requires us to rest from our own lawful labours in a similar manner.*

2. *The fourth Command, which has, I trust, been shown to be equally obligatory on all men, requires the same rest from us, which it required from the Israelites.*

3. *The original Institution, the examples of God, the Father, and the Son, and the injunctions of the fourth Command, require, in substance, all these duties.*

The duties, which they expressly require, cannot be performed to any valuable purpose, unless all the duties, specified in this discourse, are also performed. The true meaning, and real extent, of these examples and injunctions, as they respected the *Jews*, are explained in the comments of the Prophets, particularly of the Prophet Isaiah, concerning this subject. The text is the most copious, and definite, exhibition of this nature, contained in the Scriptures. In chapter lvi. of the same prophet is found, also, a comprehensive account of the duties: and we have several other, less particular, and less impressive, explanations, in other passages of the Scriptures. These injunctions and examples, then, demanded, in the view of the Spirit of Inspiration, all these duties of the Israelites. Of course, this was the true tenour of these examples and injunctions. But, if I mistake not, I have proved both to be no less obligatory on Christians, than on the *Israelites*. The same examples and injunctions have, therefore, the same tenour with respect to *us*, and bind us to exactly the same duties.

4. *The New Testament has no where dispensed with any part of these duties.*

It has been often thought, that Christ has released his followers from some part of the duties of the Sabbath, and in some degree from that strictness of observing it, which were originally required of the Jews. Observations to this amount I have not unfrequently seen, and heard; but exclusively of the things observed by *Dr. Paley*, and mentioned in the last discourse, I have never been informed of the particulars, from which Christians are thus supposed to have been released; nor do I know in what passages of the New Testament they are supposed to be contained. *Dr. Paley* believes that the Sabbath was never at all obligatory on Christians. According to this scheme, therefore, it was impossible for Christ to release them from these duties; because they were never incumbent on them. Where those, who make this supposition, find their warrant for it in the discourses of Christ, or of his Apostles, I confess myself unable to determine. The observations, which our Saviour makes, as an exposition of several parts of the Decalogue, in his Sermon on the Mount, he prefaces with these remarkable declarations: *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the*

prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil: for verily, I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass; one jot, or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. After these declarations it is impossible, that Christ should be rationally believed to have altered at all the duties of the Sabbath, much less to have annihilated it, unless he has done it, somewhere, in plain, unequivocal language. But no such language, on this subject, can be found in the New Testament. Until something of this nature shall be definitely pointed out; the duties of the Sabbath must be acknowledged to have been left by Christ, and his Apostles, exactly as they found them: and all declarations to the contrary must be regarded as merely gratuitous and presumptive.

5. *As the religious privileges of Christians are declared to be superior to those of the Jews, they cannot be supposed to be lessened with respect to the Sabbath, unless this fact is directly asserted.*

If the duties of Christians on the Sabbath are lessened, either in number, or degree; then their religious privileges are rendered just so far inferior to those of the Jews. The duties of the Sabbath are all privileges of a high and glorious nature; and cannot fail to be accounted such by every good man. I speak not, here, of the regulations of the civil laws of the Jews: these have nothing to do with the subject of the present discussion. I speak of the Sabbath, as instituted on the seventh day; as instituted immediately after the creation was finished; as enjoined anew in the fourth Command of the Decalogue; and as explained, and enforced, by the Prophets; particularly by *Isaiah*. It was a high religious privilege to a *Jew* to have one whole day in seven divinely consecrated to the duties of Religion; to be required to *esteem the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord honourable; and to turn away his foot from finding his own pleasure* on that sacred day. It was a combination of glorious privileges to a *Jew to keep the Sabbath from polluting it; to join himself on that day to the Lord; to be his servant; to take hold of his covenant; to be brought to the holy mountain of God; to be made joyful in his house of prayer; to delight himself in the Lord;* and to find his various solemn services *accepted* by his Creator. But if these duties, or any of them, be lessened in number, or degree; just so far are the privileges of a Christian inferior to those of a *Jew*. Which of these privileges would a Christian be willing to give up? Which of them does the Gospel require him to relinquish?

I shall conclude this discourse with a summary enumeration of several Motives, which strongly solicit our exact observance of the Sabbath.

1. *Such an observance of the Sabbath is required by the Command of God.*

2. *It is enforced by the Divine Example.*

God rested on the seventh day; the day after the Creation was ended. Christ rested on the first day; the day after the New

Creation was finished. This two-fold Example of Jehovah is of infinite authority; and enjoins, in the most expressive language, the faithful imitation of all mankind.

3. *The Nature of the Duties, enjoined upon the Sabbath, demands of us such an observance.*

The duties of the Sabbath are all of a religious and holy nature. Such duties can never be successfully, or profitably, performed, when mingled with secular business, or amusements. These will both distract the attention of the mind, and withdraw it from that clear, strong, affecting sense of spiritual and divine objects in which the peculiar benefit of the Sabbath is found. The soul, in this case, will be divided between God and Mammon, between the love of the world and the love of God. The consequence cannot but be foreseen. The world will predominate: God will be forgotten; and dishonoured, if not forgotten: the soul will cease from a heavenly character; debase its pure and exalted affections; lose those refined and noble views of celestial objects, which are fitted, both to inspire, and to cherish, devotion; cease to stretch its wings towards heaven; and fall down to earth, loaded with a burden of gross cares, and dragged to the ground by an incumbering mass of sensual gratifications.

At the same time, *it is far easier to observe the Sabbath wholly, than to observe it in part.* He, who intends to divide it between earthly and spiritual pursuits, will never know where to draw the line of division. Perpetually will he find himself wandering, now towards Religion, and now towards the world; while his conscience will be unceasingly embarrassed by fears, that he has neglected his duty, and by doubt concerning what it is. *There is no such thing, as a half-way performance of our duty.* If such a performance had in fact been required, or allowed; we should have been distressed by unceasing perplexity. Happy is it for us, that an ordinance of this nature cannot be found in the Scriptures.

4. *The blessing of the Sabbath is promised to such an observance.*

The text is an illustrious proof of this. *If thou do all the things,* says God, *required in the first verse; then shalt thou delight thyself in Jehovah; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.* Not, if thou do a part of these things. There is no promise to a divided service: there is no blessing connected with it. He, therefore, who wishes for the blessing of God upon his religious labours, must look for it, only in the strict and faithful observance of the duties, which He has required.

5. *It is demanded by our own highest Interest.*

The Sabbath is eminently *the day of salvation. On Zion the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for ever more.* On that holy day, and in the holy place, this incomprehensible blessing is still to be found. Where that day is not observed, and that place is not frequented, this blessing ceases to descend. If we love our

selves, then; if we love our families; if we love our country; if we love mankind; we shall exert ourselves, to the utmost, to uphold the Sabbath in its purity, in our hearts, in our conversation, and in our conduct. We shall *keep the Sabbath from polluting it;* shall observe it with the most faithful exactness; and by precept, and example, solemnly recommend it to the exact observance of others.

SERMON CIX.

FOURTH COMMANDMENT.—REFLECTIONS ON THE SABBATH.

EXODUS XX. 11.—*Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day.*

IN the four preceding discourses, I have considered *the Perpetual Establishment of the Sabbath*, and *the Manner in which it is to be observed;* and have endeavoured to *answer such Objections*, as occurred to me against the doctrines, which I have felt myself bound to maintain, concerning these subjects. I shall now close my observations on the Sabbath, *with some of those Reflections*, which this very solemn and interesting subject naturally suggests to a serious mind.

The First *Consideration which strikes such a mind, when contemplating the Sabbath, is the pre-eminent Wisdom of this divine Institution.*

Wisdom, as applied to conduct, denotes the choice of desirable ends, and the selection of happy means for their accomplishment. The ends, aimed at, in the institution of the Sabbath, are numerous, and all of them eminently desirable. The means, by which they are accomplished, are, at the same time, eminently happy. The Sabbath, and the things immediately connected with it, are the amount of them all.

Among these ends let me remark; since God himself has been pleased to mention it, and to mention it in the fourth command of the decalogue; *the provision, which this holy day furnishes, of a season of rest to labouring Animals.*

A righteous man regards the life of his beast, says the wisest of all men: Prov. x. 12. In this fact we behold a strong resemblance of a righteous man to his Creator. The goodness of this glorious Being is forcibly displayed in the provision, which he has made, for the rest and comfort of labouring animals, in the Moral Law. In the hands even of prudent and humane masters, it is clearly seen, that such animals are sufficiently employed when they labour six days of the week, and are released to rest and refreshment on the seventh. God, who perfectly knew what their strength was able to bear, and who perfectly foresaw how greatly they would be oppressed by avarice and cruelty, was pleased, in this solemn manner, and at this early period, to provide for their relief, by securing to them the quiet and restoration of one day in seven. In this merciful provision, the divine tenderness is displayed in a most amiable and edifying manner. The humble character of even these beings did not place them below the compassionate care of

God. Elsewhere, he has commanded us to supply them with food. Here, he has commanded us to furnish them with rest. In both cases, he has taught us, that *the Lord is good and kind to all, and* that *his tender mercies are over all the works of his hands.* This indulgence to animals is enjoined with infinite authority; and secured by the same sanction, which enforces justice and beneficence towards mankind. By bringing up this subject, also, in form, thus solemnly, regularly, and often, he has formed our regard towards these creatures into a habit; and prevented us from the possibility of being inattentive to this duty.

In the same manner are Rest and Refreshment secured to mankind. Children and servants, particularly, are by this institution preserved from the oppression of severe masters, and the unfeeling demands of unnatural parents. Every industrious man will tell you from his own experience, that the season of labour is sufficiently long, and this return of rest absolutely necessary for the preservation of health, and strength, and life; that greater toil would fatigue the bodily powers into decay; and that the weekly cessation from business is not more frequent than our worldly interests clearly demand. Hence, unless when under the dominion of avarice, he will consider the Sabbath as a benevolent provision for his true worldly interest. What will thus be approved by the man, who labours voluntarily, and for himself, cannot fail to be cordially welcomed by him, who is compelled, through indigence, to toil for others: the servant drudging for a hard master, and the child trembling under the rod of an unfeeling parent.

Nor is the usefulness of the Sabbath less visible in the promotion of Neatness and Cleanliness; especially among the inferior classes of mankind. No person is willing to appear in a religious assembly, unless cleanly and decently dressed. So true is this, that probably in all countries, where the Sabbath is observed, every one, not prevented by absolute poverty, has what is proverbially called *a sunday suit of clothes.* The spirit of cleanliness and decency, awakened by the return of this holy day, is *always* thus awakened. Excited every week, it is of course excited through the week; becomes an immoveable habit; extends its influence through all the concerns of human life; and, in the end, constitutes the standing character. *Individuals* are thus prevented from becoming brutes in their appearance; and *a nation* is fashioned into an entire and delightful contrast to the native dirt and slovenliness of man, always exhibited, in so humiliating a manner by Savages. The influence of this single fact on the comfort of human life, cannot be calculated.

Inseparably connected with this article, is the Softness and Civility of Manners, to which the Sabbath, more than any thing else, allures mankind. Every thing pertaining to the Sabbath generates, of course, this desirable conduct. The neatness of dress, and the decency of appearance, just mentioned, strongly persuade to it. A

person, better dressed than in the ordinary manner, will, regularly, behave with more than ordinary decency, unless *habitually* thus dressed. The association in our thoughts between the dress and the manners, (both of which are intended to make us appear with advantage) is instinctive, and inseparable. Every thing connected with the Sabbath, also, inspires such views and affections, as contribute to the manners in question. We are, of course, united to a respectable assembly; on a sacred day; in a sacred place; upon a most affecting occasion; and for ends the most solemn and important in the universe. We are immediately before God, and are employed in his worship; in confessing our sins, in seeking the forgiveness of them, and in labouring to obtain an interest in his favour. We cannot, here, fail to feel our needy, frail, guilty, dependent, character; to see how little and insignificant we are; how unbecoming are pride, unkindness, and insolence; how becoming humility, modesty, condescension, and gentleness; how amiable, in the sight of God, is *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*; and how necessary for every purpose for which we have assembled, the establishment of these things in our hearts. From these considerations must spring, of course, in every man, who is not void of all propensity to that which is good, both gentleness of mind, and sweetness of manners.

I have already glanced at *the tendency of the Sabbath to abase our pride, and to remove our native ruggedness of disposition.* This part of the subject deserves a further consideration. One of the chief deformities of character in the rich, the learned, and the great, is that haughtiness of mind, which, on account of their peculiar advantages, they are ever ready to feel; and one of the chief causes of suffering to the poor, the ignorant, and the powerless, is that insolence of behaviour, which from this haughtiness they are compelled to endure. But when the superior classes of mankind assemble in the house of God, they sink, at once, even in their own eyes, if they open them, down to the same level with their fellow-worms. In the presence of Him, *before whom all nations are as nothing*, the glare of splendour, the pride of wealth, the self-sufficiency of learning, and the loftiness of power, are annihilated in a moment. Those, who, a little while before, felt themselves to be rich, and wise, and great, find that they are poor, ignorant, little, guilty, odious to God, exposed to his wrath, and hopeless, except in the mere character of suppliants for mercy.

When a great man, in the Sanctuary, looks around him on a mixed assembly of his equals and inferiors; he will be compelled often to feel, and secretly to confess, that his poor neighbour, whom perhaps he *would have disdained*, on other occasions, *to set with the dogs of his flock*, is, in all probability, more excellent, more wise, more lovely, and in every sense greater, *in the sight of the Highest*, than himself. Nothing can humble pride more than the elevation above itself of those, whom it despises. This elevation

of the humble, this useful depression of the haughty, is no where more perfect than in the house of God.

Here, as will be realized from what has been already said, the poor and lowly rise, of course, above their usual level. *The rich and the poor*, says *Solomon*, *meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all.* In the house of God they *meet together* in a manner wholly peculiar; are placed exactly on the same level; and are more strongly, than any where else, reminded, that *the Lord is the Maker of them all.* Here, they assemble as creatures of the same God merely. Here, all their earthly distinctions vanish; and a new distinction, formed only of sin and holiness, commences; which, unless terminated in the present world, will endure, and widen, for ever. Here, then, the poor man rises to his proper independence and distinction, forgets the depression of his circumstances; and, without the aid of pride, assumes an elevation of character, not less necessary to him for the faithful discharge of his duty, than the humility of the Gospel to the lofty-minded. Thus the Sabbath, like its Author, *putteth down the mighty from their seats*, and *exalteth them of low degree.* How perfect, in this important particular, is an institution, which produces these opposite and indispensable benefits in those, whose situation so plainly and loudly demands them!

Another immense benefit of the Sabbath is *the Instruction, which it furnishes in Morals and Religion.*

The value of knowledge is admitted by all civilized men. It will usually, and ought ever, to be admitted, also, that moral and religious knowledge is of far more value than any other. It is more necessary, more practical, more useful, more enlarging to the mind, more refined, and more exalted. The least acquaintance with the subject will place this assertion beyond a doubt.

As the knowledge itself is more valuable; so the Sabbath furnishes means for obtaining it, which are far cheaper, and far more efficacious, than were ever furnished by any other institution. Here on a day devoted to no employment but the gaining of this knowledge, and the performance of those religious duties which unite with it in perfect harmony; in a place convenient and sacred; on an occasion infinitely important; and with the strong power of sympathy to aid and impress; a thousand persons are taught the best of all knowledge; the most useful to themselves, and the most beneficial to mankind; for a less sum, than must be expended by a twentieth part of their number, in order to obtain the same instruction in any other science. No device of the heathen Philosophers, or of modern Infidels, greatly as they have boasted of their wisdom, can be compared, as to its usefulness, with this. The Sabbath, particularly, is *the only mean, ever devised, of communicating important instruction to the great mass of mankind.* Here, all may assemble, all may learn, from the prince to the beggar, from the man of grey hairs to the infant of days. Had the

Sabbath been a device of man, men would be able to boast of immensely greater ingenuity and wisdom, than they have hitherto displayed; and would be justly pronounced to have formed a more successful and more patriotic institution, for the benefit of mankind, than any which is found on the page of history. Here, a real and glorious equality of privileges is established, not only without confusion and discord, but with strong enforcements of peace and good order. In these great blessings, all are, here, alike interested, and all partake alike.

To the blessings of Peace and Good order, universally, the Sabbath contributes, also, in a pre-eminent degree. Moral and religious knowledge is the knowledge of our duty, and of the rewards, which God will give to such as perform it. To this knowledge the Sabbath adds the highest motives to the performance, which are found in the universe. All good, internal, and external, in time and eternity, allures to it, as a direct and certain reward. All evil compels to it as a threatening, and deters from the omission as a punishment inevitable and endless. This knowledge, and these motives, the Sabbath furnishes, with a solemnity and force altogether unrivalled. From the house of God they are carried with us into every concern of life, where duty is to be performed; and duty is to be performed in every concern. With the influence of the Sabbath on his mind, man every where feels himself accountable to his Maker; and in darkness and solitude, in the secrecy of thought, as well as in the conduct inspected by the public eye, realizes, that the all-searching God is a constant witness of whatever he thinks, speaks, or does. From this consideration, more than from the dread of the dungeon and the halter, most men are inclined to restrain their hands from injustice and violence, from tumult and confusion. In the mean time, the peace and good order of religious assemblies, on the Sabbath, furnish the highest specimen of this happy conduct, that was ever seen in the present world. Fifty-two Sabbaths, every year, is this conduct repeated. Hence, it becomes a powerful as well as desirable habit; and clings to him, who steadily visits the house of God, through the remainder of every week. In this manner, it is diffused through the life; and influences the thoughts, words, and actions, towards men of every class and character. The magistrate and the subject, the parent and the child, the master and the servant, the friend and the neighbour, are benefitted by it alike. All of them acquire more peaceful dispositions; exhibit a more amiable deportment; pursue a more orderly conduct, and fill their respective stations with greater propriety, than either would do under the influence of every other cause, except the immediate agency of God.

It will not be denied, that each of the things, which I have specified, is an important benefit to mankind, nor that all of them united are of advantage inestimable. But the Sabbath has bless-

ings to give, of a still higher nature. Among them this is one, of supreme moment; that *the Sabbath is the great mean of preserving in the world the Knowledge, and the Worship, of the one living and true God.* Wherever the Sabbath is not, there is no worship, no religion. Man forgets God; and God forsakes man. The moral world becomes a desert, where life never springs, and beauty never smiles. The beams of the Sun of Righteousness never dawn upon the miserable waste; the rains of heaven never descend. Putrid with sin, and shrunk with ignorance, the soul of man loses its rational character; and prostrates itself before devils, men, beasts, and reptiles, insects, stocks, and stones. To these man offers his prayers, his praises and his victims; to these, he sacrifices his children; and to these, he immolates the purity and honour of his wife. A brutal worshipper of a brutal God, he hopes for protection and blessing from the assumption of every folly, and the perpetration of every crime.

If his mind becomes enlightened by science, and these absurdities, as they sometimes may, become too gross and too naked to be received by him; he becomes an infidel, a sceptic, an atheist. The absurdity, here, is not indeed less, but greater. The only material difference is, that it is less palpable, less exposed to vulgar eyes, less susceptible of ridicule. The former is the madness of a blockhead; the latter of a man of learning: that the folly of the clown; this of the man of fashion. In this case, the votary wanders through all the labyrinths of subtile disquisition; proves right to be wrong, and wrong to be right; and demonstrates, that there is nothing either right or wrong. Freed from these incumbrances, men of this character cast their eyes towards the enjoyments of this world, and covet their neighbour's house, and their neighbour's wife; his man-servant, and his maid-servant; his ox, and his ass; and every thing that is their neighbour's. Nothing, now, intervenes between themselves and the objects coveted, but the apprehension of resistance, and the dread of punishment. Elevate them to power, and the Sabbath is changed into the *decade*, and the house of God into a stable; the Bible is paraded through the streets on an ass, and consumed upon a bonfire; immortal existence is blotted out of the divine kingdom; the Redeemer is postponed to a murderer; and the Creator to a prostitute, styled the Goddess of Reason. The end of this progress might be easily foreseen. Legalized plunder, legislative butchery, the prostitution of a kingdom, fields drenched in human blood, and cities burnt by human incendiaries, fill up the tremendous measure of iniquity; bewildering the gazing world with astonishment; awaken the shouts of fiends; and cover heaven itself with a robe of sackcloth.

But for the Sabbath, this assembly had now been prostrate before the stock of a tree, or sitting round the circle of a pawaw; or, frantic with rage and frenzy, had been roaming the mountains in

honour of *Bacchus ;* or drowning with shouts and screams the cries of a human victim, offered up to appease the wrath of an imaginary Deity.

But *thanks be to God for* this *unspeakable gift!* The Sabbath, *according to his abundant mercy*, returns, at the close of every week, to shine upon us with its peaceful and benevolent beams. At the close of every week, with *a still, small voice* it summons us to the house of God. Here, we meet, and find, and know, and serve, our glorious and blessed Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Here, *on the mercy-seat*, he sits enthroned, to hear our complaints and petitions, to receive our praises, to accept our repentance, and to forgive our sins for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here, he makes known *his* pleasure and *our* duty. Here, he promises to those, who obey, divine and eternal rewards ; and threatens those, who disobey, with terrible and never-ending punishments. Seen every week in these awful and amiable characters, God cannot be unknown nor forgotten. Accordingly, throughout the ages of Christianity, his presence and agency are understood every where, and by every person, who frequents the house of God. The little child is as familiarly acquainted with them, as the man of grey hairs ; the peasant, as the monarch. *All*, in this sense, *know God, from the least to the greatest ;* and *there* is *no occasion for a man to say to his neighbour, Know the Lord.*

Intimately connected with this vast and interesting subject, and in an important sense the effect of the Sabbath only, *is the Attainment of holiness and salvation.*

Man, an apostate, guilty and condemned, infinitely needs a renovation of his character, a reversal of his sentence, an escape from his punishment, and a reinstatement in the glorious privileges from which he has fallen. To accomplish these inestimable and benevolent ends, God, according to the language of the text, has *hallowed, and blessed, the Sabbath.* Through every age, and through every land, where the Sabbath has been kept holy unto the Lord, this blessing has, regularly, and uninterruptedly, descended. There, the glad tidings of salvation have been published, and received. There, men have sought, and found, JEHOVAH, their God ; repented of their sins ; believed on the Lord Jesus Christ ; renewed their allegiance to their rightful Sovereign ; obtained the pardon of their sins, and the justification of their souls ; triumphed over death and the grave ; ascended to heaven ; and begun the possession of everlasting joy. *Wherever* even *two or three have met together in the name of Christ, there* he has been *in the midst of them*, and *blessed them* with his peculiar blessing. This holy, heavenly season has regularly opened the correspondence between this miserable world, and the world of life and glory, and preserved the connexion between God and men. To it, earth owes its chief blessings ; and heaven no small part of its inhabitants, and of its unfading joys.

But where mankind have *forsaken the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is*, all these blessings have ceased. *The fruitful land has been converted into marshes, and miry places, which could not be healed, and were therefore given to salt.* In such places, the world, and sin, and Satan, take entire possession of the heart, and leave no room for God. All the thoughts and desires are the offspring of *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.* Like *Ahab*, men *sell themselves, to work wickedness:* like *Jeroboam*, they *sin*, and *make* all around them *to sin.* There, no prayers ascend to heaven; no voice of mercy is heard from that happy world, inviting sinners to faith and repentance in the Lord Jesus Christ. God is neither sought, nor found. None ask for mercy; and none receive it. None knock at the door of life; and to none is it opened. All enter *into the broad and crooked road*, and *go down to the chambers of death*; while God, with an awful voice, proclaims, concerning them, *Ephraim is joined to Idols: let him alone.*

Pause now, for a moment, and recollect the number, the greatness, the glory, of these Ends; and tell me if the Institution, which unites and accomplishes them all, in perfect harmony, is not supremely wise, and worthy of God. How easily does it accomplish them; how perfectly; how universally! How happy is the frequent, convenient, necessary return of this holy day! After how desirable intervals; with what useful regularity; with what sweet serenity! How necessary is it to the sinner, to call him off from the world, from stupidity, from sottishness! How necessary to awaken his attention to God, to holiness, and to heaven; to engage his thoughts on spiritual and divine objects; to begin his repentance, faith, and love; and to place his feet in *the path, which leads to* immortal *life!* How necessary to the saint, to rouse him from sloth; to recall him from sin; to remind him of his duty; to increase his faith and holiness, and to help him forward in his journey towards heaven! How necessary to *Adam* in his innocence; how infinitely necessary to all his ruined offspring! In a word, how plainly has the Sabbath been *blessed*, as well as *hallowed!* blessed, from the beginning to the present time; blessed, in a multitude of particulars; blessed, in every land, where it has been known, with the immediate and peculiar favour of God, with the nearest resemblance to the blessings of immortality!

2. *The mind of a good man cannot fail, also, to be deeply affected with the Solemnity of this Institution.*

When God had ended the glorious work of Creation, *he rested the seventh day from all the work, which he had made.* The creation was now fresh from the forming hand of JEHOVAH. The great Architect had *builded his stories in the heaven; had numbered the Stars, and called them all by their names; had appointed the moon for seasons, and caused the sun to know his going down.* He had filled the world with beauty and fragrance, with glory and grand-

cur, with life and immortality. In the full view of this transporting, this amazing scene; in the strong apprehension of the infinite perfections, which it unfolded; *the Morning Stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy:* while the Author of all things beheld the works, which his hands had made, and pronounced them *very good.* The praise, begun by Angels, our first parents reiterated, on the first morning of their existence; and made their delightful residence vocal with hymns to their Creator. The first employment of Paradise, the first work done by man, was the worship of God. Thus the dawn of human existence was opened by the same divine employment, which will unceasingly occupy the everlasting day of heaven. When the command to *remember this day* was given, there were, *in the morning, thunders, and lightnings; and a thick cloud,* upon Mount *Sinai,* and *the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke; because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole Mount quaked greatly.* In the midst of this amazing grandeur, in the midst of these awful terrors, God, with his own voice, spoke this command, and wrote it with his own finger. With this example, and with these solemnities, was one day in seven consecrated to JEHOVAH.

When the new Creation was finished, the Creation of holiness in the soul of man, the creation of a Church, comprising immense multitudes of immortal minds, as a holy and eternal kingdom unto God; Christ arose from the dead to endless life and glory, *became the first fruits of them that slept,* and their forerunner into the heavens. On this divine occasion, the same exalted beings; who sang together, when the heavens and the earth were made, and proclaimed *glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will towards men,* when the Saviour of the world was born; now renewed their songs, and entered with Christ into the highest heavens, with all the pomp and splendour which invested *Sinai,* at the promulgation of the law.

On this day the Spirit of grace and truth descended upon the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour; baptized them with fire; endued them with inspiration, the gift of tongues, and the spirit of prophecy; gave them to understand the Gospel in its glorious mysteries; and enabled them, with wonderful miracles, to prove its divine origin, and thus to erect the spiritual kingdom of God in the world.

All these examples, the most august, the most amazing, which the universe ever beheld, leave their whole weight, their infinite authority, upon this institution. Every Christian, therefore, while he keeps the Sabbath holy unto God, ought, in order to quicken himself in his duty, to remember, that on this sacred day God rested; that his Redeemer rested; that the Spirit of Grace descended; and that angels repeatedly united together in enraptured

praise. Nor ought he, in any wise, to forget that no institution can plead so many, and so great things, done to solemnize and consecrate it as holy unto God, and as indispensably binding upon man.

3. *We learn from the observations already made, with what emotions the Sabbath ought to be regarded by us.*

We assemble in the house of God, to glorify him in the religious worship which he has appointed; to seek the everlasting life of our own souls; to obtain and increase holiness in our hearts; to remember, admire, and celebrate, the wonderful works of the old and new creations, and the glorious perfections of the Creator and Redeemer. What emotions ought we to feel while engaged in this divine employment? Such, unquestionably, as Angels experienced, when these works were done, and these perfections were displayed.

Particularly, *the Sabbath demands of all men profound Reverence and solemn Awe.* All the things which have been mentioned are supremely great, sublime, and wonderful. The most awful of all beings is brought near to our hearts, and presents himself before our eyes, in manifestations of the most majestic and astonishing nature. Had we been present at the work of creation, and heard the awful command which brought into being the immense mass of original elements: had we seen the light at the bidding of the great Workman, disclose, and involve the formless confusion; the sea and the dry land separate; the grass, the herbs, and the trees, instantaneously arise, and clothe the earth in one universal robe of life and beauty; the sun, the moon, and the stars lighted up in the heavens; the various animals filling the world with living beings; and man the lord, the crown, and the glory of the whole, formed a rational and immortal being, to understand, enjoy, and celebrate, the divine work: could we have failed to experience the most profound awe, amid this complication of infinite wonders, and to glorify the great Author of them with *that fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom?*

Had we again been present at the Crucifixion of our divine Redeemer, and beheld the earth tremble, the rocks rend, the veil of the temple part asunder, the graves open, the saints arise, and the sun hide his face in darkness; had we accompanied his body to the tomb, and watched the descent of the Angel, the convulsions of the second earthquake, the lightnings which streamed from his countenance, and the swooning of the guards who kept the sepulchre; had we seen our Lord resume his life, come forth from the grave to his doubting, trembling disciples; had we seen him rise from the earth, enter the bosom of the cloud of glory, and, with a solemn and magnificent progress, ascend to the heavens; must not the same awful emotions have been instinctively renewed?

But all these things, this sacred day, this divine festival, places before our eyes. If, at the same time, we further remember, that we are in the house of God; that hither he comes to meet us on design of infinite love; to forgive our sins, to renew, receive, and save our souls; that we stand before him as sinners, as apostates, condemned, ruined, helpless, and, in ourselves, hopeless, also; that we are suppliants for mere mercy, dependent on the obedience of another, and without any righteousness of our own; must we not feel our littleness and our guilt? Must we not, instinctively, lay our hands on our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, and cry, "Unclean?" Can we fail to fear *that glorious and fearful name*, JEHOVAH; *our God?*

Thus emotion every thing in the Scriptures conspires to improve and strengthen. The Law of God, with all its commands, promises and threatenings, its divine rewards and amazing penalties; the Gospel, with its solemn establishment of the Law, its remedies for the imperfections of the Law, as the means of life for sinners, its glorious invitations, supreme allurements, and heavenly promises; conspire with infinite force to persuade us to *fear the Lord our God, and* to *tremble at his word.* He, who is thoughtless and irreverent here, ought to have considered how he would have felt amid the thunders, the lightnings, the earthquake, the sound of the trumpet, and the flame of devouring fire, from which the Creator said, *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.* To this man, more than to almost any other sinner, is addressed that humbling rebuke, *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider.*

At the same time, *the Sabbath is to be regarded with peculiar Joy.*

All things relating to the Sabbath, are not only solemn, but joyful, things. At the Creation, a new Universe started up into being; and life, reason, virtue, and immortality, were given to an endless multitude of creatures. At the New Creation, an endless multitude of perishing sinners, destined to eternal sin and eternal wo, were recalled from the melancholy regions of death and depravity to immortal holiness, life, and glory. On these stupendous occasions *all the Sons of God shouted for joy.* We are still more interested in the last of them, than they could be: for we are the miserable beings, who are redeemed, and saved. On the Sabbath, the great body of the Church has been brought into the kingdom of grace, and prepared for the kingdom of glory. On the first Sabbath, upon which began the great work of erecting the kingdom of Christ in the world by the Apostles, *three thousand souls were added unto the Lord.* On the first Sabbath, the Apostles were *baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire*, and divinely empowered to spread salvation through the world. On the Sabbath, the souls of men have ever since been flocking into the kingdom of Christ, and taking possession of immortality. The Sabbath has

been the great means of preserving that kingdom. To the Sabbath it is owing, that the glad tidings of salvation are now heard in this desolate world. To the Sabbath it is owing, that in this land, where, ever since the deluge, nothing was heard but the howlings of wild beasts, the war-screams of savages, or the groans of torture and death, now through a thousand Churches is weekly resounded the music of heaven, and the proclamation of life eternal to mankind. The Sabbath is appropriately *the accepted time;* it is eminently *the day of salvation.* To the Sabbath will our salvation be owed, if we attain salvation. On the Sabbath, all Christian assemblies meet to offer up their humble prayers; to send up their hymns of praise to their *Father who is in heaven;* to teach, and receive, *the words of eternal life;* to be *baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;* and to receive the body and blood of their crucified Redeemer. On the Sabbath, the Christian world bears, in this manner, no unhappy resemblance of heaven; and a little part of the melancholy hours of time becomes a fair image of the pure and never-ending Sabbath beyond the grave.

With these delightful things in view, can we fail to unite with *the Church of the first-born,* and *the innumerable company of Angels,* and repeat and respond their divine exultation? Shall not our sons bear an humble unison with theirs? Shall not the joy which they feel on the great business of this day, the repentance and return of sinners, find a welcome admission to our hearts? Shall we not *rejoice in Him that made us;* shall not *the children of Zion be joyful in their King?*

God on this day rejoiced over the creation, which his hands had made. Angels rejoiced in the wonders of the work, and in the divine Workman. Christ rejoiced over the Church, which he redeemed with his own blood. Heaven has rejoiced at every return of this delightful season; and renewed its transports over all the sons of *Adam,* whom this day has with divine efficacy raised from death to life. *The Lord God is* now our *Sun, and* our *Shield.* Now *he gives grace and glory.* This day *he withholds no good thing from them that walk uprightly.* Let mortals behold these things with wonder and gratulation; and anticipate the pure and permanent transports of the everlasting Sabbath in the heavens.

Nor is this holy day *to be less regarded with Gratitude.*

All the benevolent things, which God has done for us, this day brings before our eyes. Our being, our daily blessings, our Redemption, our Salvation, the resumed character of holiness, the title to endless life, the final escape from sin and misery, this heavenly season proclaims with an unceasing voice. At this season, God comes down to dwell among men, devested, with respect to all who are willing to receive him, of the awful frowns of an offended Judge, clothed with the smiles of an eternal benefactor, and adorned with the endearing titles of the Father, the Redeemer,

and the Sanctifier, of man. Here, the calls to gratitude are all united. The blessings of earth and heaven, of time and eternity, here invite us to love, and praise, the Author of all our mercies. Can we fail to *render to him according to his benefits?* Can we fail, this day to ascribe *blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.*

4. *How ought the Christian Church to bless God for this Institution.*

To this Institution we owe far the greater part of the spiritual blessings, which we enjoy; and in a high sense, we owe them all. But for this day, we should neither have sought, nor secured, eternal life: for where no Sabbath is, there is no religion. But for this day, earthly things would have engrossed all our thoughts. Honour, wealth, and pleasure, are the real Syrens, which charm mankind to shipwreck and death. To their songs the ear of man is by nature attuned, and the heart beats in regular response. But for this day, the world, as a canker, would rust, corrupt, and consume all the disposition to piety, and all the hopes of heaven. The soul would be benumbed. Religion would die. God would be forgotten. The death of Christ would be vain. Mankind, would cease to be saved: and heaven would fail of her destined inhabitants. How desolate the prospect! How strongly would this world resemble the regions of final despair; where no Sabbath dawns; where no prayers nor praises ascend; no sermons proclaim pardon and peace to sinners; the voice of mercy never sounds; and the smiles of forgiving, redeeming, and sanctifying love never illumine the dreary valley of the shadow of death.

All things, pertaining to salvation, are social things; things of general participation and powerful sympathy. They exist chiefly in multitudes. Without the Sabbath, there is no reason to believe, that they could exist at all. Not where *one* is employed in religious worship, merely, nor principally; but where *two or three are met together in the name of Christ;* is his presence promised. Not in the closet, the recess, or the solitude, but *on Zion, whither the tribes go up, has the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.*

5. *What an illustrious type is the Sabbath, of the everlasting rest, enjoyed by the Children of God!*

The Sabbath is a rest from sin, business, and pleasure; a day, in which God is worshipped, divine knowledge improved, and holiness attained and increased; a day, in which saints delightfully commune, and joyfully celebrate the wonders of Creation, and the sublimer wonders of Redemption. On the Sabbath, God is peculiarly present, reconciled, forgiving, and sanctifying; and the spirit of truth eminently communicates comfortable evidence of divine love, whispers peace, and inspires joy. The Sabbath is, therefore, the day of hope and consolation, of enjoyment and

triumph; the foretaste of heaven; the entrance to the glorious assembly of the blessed.

The future rest of the children of God is divinely formed of these delightful ingredients. Here eternal peace begins its undisturbed reign over all the great kingdom of Jehovah. Here, immortal minds are consummated in that holiness, which is *the image of the heavenly Adam*. Here, those minds, in the exercise of that holiness, with exalted friendship, and pure unbosomed intercourse, commence their everlasting joy. Here, *God is all in all*. Here, he unveils his face, and discloses the smiles of infinite love to the assembly of the first born. And here, *the Lamb*, *the glory of God*, and *the light* of heaven, illumines all their thoughts, quickens all their affections, *feeds them with living bread*, *leads them to fountains of living waters*, and *awakens into transport*, *their hymns of never-ending praise*.

SERMON CX.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT.—DUTY OF CHILDREN.

EXODUS XX. 12.—*Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

THE *four first Commands* of the Decalogue enjoin those which are called *the Duties of Piety*. These were written on the first table; and were summed up by *Moses*, and by Christ, in this general one: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.* We are now entering upon the consideration of the *six last;* directing what are commonly called *the duties of Morality*, or *our duties towards mankind.* These were written upon the second table, and are summed up by *Moses*, by Christ, and by *St. Paul*, in *the second great command*, styled by *St. James*, the *Royal law: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* The first of these Commands is the text. As a general preface to the observations, which I propose to make, successively, on these Commands, it will be proper to remark, that they are universally to be extended according to the interpretation, given by our Saviour of *the sixth* and *seventh*, in his Sermon on the Mount. In commenting on *the former of these*, Christ teaches us, that to *be angry with our brother without a cause, to say unto him Raca*, or *thou fool*, is to be guilty of a breach of this command. In commenting on *the seventh*, he declares that *whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her, the same hath committed adultery with her, already, in his heart.* Generally, *all these precepts are to be considered as directing our duty, in all respects, which by inference or analogy, can be fairly arranged under them.* Accordingly, (to give an example) I shall consider this command as regulating the duties, reciprocally owed by parents and children, magistrates and subjects, and by other classes of mankind in their several relations. That I am warranted in this mode of explaining these precepts, is, I think, evident from the conduct of our Saviour. I shall only add, that in this manner they have been generally understood by divines, and extensively declared in Catechisms: For example, in that of the *Westminster* Assembly, that of *Dr. Nowell*, and that of *King Edward.* In the examination of the subjects, involved in this command, I shall begin with that, which is directly expressed: THE DUTY OF CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS.

The word *honour*, by which this duty is here enjoined, is chosen with supreme felicity; as being sufficiently comprehensive, and sufficiently definite, to express with as much exactness, as can easily be compassed, all the several branches of duty, which parents can equitably demand of their children. Particularly, it is explained by Christ, commenting, Matt. xv. 3, on the vile fetch, by which the Pharisees released their disciples from obedience to this precept, to involve the obligation of children *to support their parents in their indigence, and old age.* It is also explained by St. Paul, as enjoining *the universal obedience of children.* In its own primary sense, also, it denotes all *the affection, and veneration, which children owe to their parents*, and which constitute so extensive and important a part of filial piety.

Filial duties are so numerous, that many volumes might be written on this subject only, without particularizing them all. Within the limits prescribed to these discourses, it is obvious, nothing more can be done, than to exhibit briefly the prominent things, included in this and the following precepts. Nothing more, therefore, will be attempted. According to this plan, Filial Duty may be advantageously comprised under the following heads.

I. *Children are bound to regard their parents with respect and reverence at all times.*

Particularly, these exercises of filial piety are,

1. *To exist in the Thoughts.*

Keep thy heart, said *David* to *Solomon, with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.* All good proceeds from this source, as well as all evil. In vain will children labour to perform their duty in any other manner, if they neglect it in this. Here, the whole course of filial piety begins; and, if not commenced here, will never be pursued with any success. Thoughts are the soul, the living principle of all duty. Every thing else is a lifeless body without a soul, a shadow without a substance.

Every child is bound to entertain the most respectful and reverential *thoughts* concerning his parents, and concerning the parental character. He is to remember, and regard his parents, as standing in the most venerable, and the most endearing, of all earthly relations to him; as those, to whom, under God, he owes his being, and the great mass of his blessings. He is to regard them as the persons, to whose kindness, care, and government, he has been committed by God himself. He is to consider them as the best of all friends; the most affectionate, the most faithful, the most confidential, the most persevering, the most watchful, the most unwearied.

His affections towards them ought ever to be reverential, grateful, warm, and full of kindness. Whatever his plans or purposes are, he ought invariably to feel, that they will be most safely and in every case of any importance should be regularly, entrusted to them for advice and direction. Parents, unless when under the

immediate influence of some strong passion or prejudice, very rarely oppose, of design, the real interests of their children. Almost all the counsels, injunctions, and reproofs, which they give, and which the children at times consider as unkind, are given, intentionally at least, for their good; and ought to be regarded only in this manner. Children are bound to fix in their minds a habitual sense of the superior station, and wisdom, of their parents, and of their own inferiority in all these respects. Their thoughts and affections towards them ought, universally, to spring from this sense of their superiority: a superiority, originated by the creating hand of God, and consummated by his most holy law. To this sense ought all their views to be conformed. The beginnings of irreverence, the first tendencies towards disadvantageous, light, disrespectful apprehensions concerning them, they are bound to crush in the bud, and to cultivate with watchful care every affectionate and respectful emotion.

By the Providence of God it is frequently brought to pass, that parents are in humble life; uneducated; ignorant; little regarded by the world; irreligious; not unfrequently openly vicious, and sometimes plainly scandalous. Here, filial piety, it must be acknowledged, becomes a harder task; and especially in the last mentioned cases, is attended with serious difficulty in its various duties. Children are, however, to remember, that God has given even the children of such parents no dispensation, with respect to their filial duties. The Command in the text is addressed to *them* no less absolutely than to *other children*. As their case is more difficult; they are required to make more careful and vigorous exertions; to forget the personal character, and to remember only the parental. The children may be better educated; may know more; may have better dispositions; and may sustain better characters. Let them remember, that to God in the first place, and ordinarily, to these very parents in the second, they owe these blessings: and let them show their gratitude, their superior understanding, to the eye of Him, from whom they derive their all, by cultivating the sentiments which I have urged, and by resisting effectually those which I have condemned. He who gave them parents, he who made them children, he who said to them, *Honour thy father and thy mother*, has an indisputable right to require this conduct at their hands. If the duty is difficult; it is proportionally excellent, honourable, and lovely.

2. *The same exercises of filial piety are to be manifested in the Words of children.*

The words, uttered by children, which respect their parents in any manner, are to correspond with the thoughts, which have been here recommended, and, if effectual care is taken to make the thoughts right, the words will be right of course.

When children speak to their parents, they are required ever to speak modestly, submissively, and respectfully. Whatever

opinions children may entertain, which may differ from those of their parents in any case, it is their duty to propose with humility, meekness, and respect. They are to address them, not as disputants; not as equals; but as children; as modest inferiors. Both their words, and their manner of uttering them, should bear unequivocal evidence, that they are conscious of this character.

When children speak of their parents to others, they are bound to speak with the most exact caution, and with similar respect; and never to say any thing concerning them, which they would be unwilling to say to them, when present. It is their duty invariably to endeavour, so far as truth and propriety will admit, to render the character of their parents respectable in the eyes of others. The faults of their parents it is their duty to conceal; their excellencies always readily to admit; and to experience, and manifest, their satisfaction, when others admit them. They are not indeed to boast of the good qualities of their parents; as they are not to boast of any thing else; but with modesty and propriety to welcome them, when mentioned by others; and, when they have a becoming occasion, to speak of them themselves.

Sometimes children are compelled to the mortification of hearing their parents ill spoken of by others. Their duty then requires them, whenever they can do it with success, to repel the ungenerous attack, and to defend the character of their parents. If this is not in their power; they are bound to manifest their indignation and disgust, by such declarations as the nature of the case demands; and at least to prevent themselves from the pain, and mischief, produced by such conversation, by withdrawing finally, from persons of this unreasonable and abusive character.

3. *The same spirit ought to appear in all the Deportment of Children.*

The deportment of children, when their parents are present, ought to exhibit every mark of respect. The honour, required in the text, ought, in the literal sense, to be here invariably rendered, without qualification, without reserve, without reluctance. However humble the station, the circumstances, the education or the manners of parents may be; the child, instead of discovering, that he is ashamed of them, or of assuming to himself airs of importance, is bound cheerfully to acknowledge their proper superiority; to exhibit towards them a respectful deference; and always to prevent even a remote suspicion, that he is reluctant to give them their proper place.

II. *Children are bound to obey the Commands of their parents.*

That it is the province of parents to govern, and that of children to obey, will not be questioned. Nor will it be doubted, that children are equally bound to abstain from things, prohibited by their parents, as to perform those, which they enjoin. Of this obedience it may be observed,

1. *That it ought to be uniform and faithful.*

Children, says *St. Paul*, *obey your parents in all things; for this is right, and well-pleasing to the Lord.* To the universality of this precept there is but one exception; and that is when the injunction is contrary to the Law of God. The obedience of little children ought undoubtedly to be implicit. They are plainly incapable of directing their own conduct; and parents are appointed by God himself to direct it. While it is the duty of the parent to instruct his child in the nature of moral conduct, and the reasonableness, and rectitude of his own commands, as fast as the understanding of the child will permit; and to give no commands, which are not agreeable to the will of God: it is undoubtedly the duty of the child to obey every parental precept, except such as are of this nature. To this rule I know of no exception.

Filial obedience is commonly rendered without much difficulty, when parents are present. Every child should remember, that his obligations to obedience are not lessened by their absence; that God is then present; that he has required them not to obey with eye-service; and that he records all their conduct in the book of his remembrance.

They are, also, ever to keep in mind, that they are required to obey *difficult* commands, as well as those which are *easy;* those which require much self-denial, labour, and trouble, as well as those which are attended only with pleasure; those in which their disobedience will never be detected, as well as those in which it will certainly be known. No other obedience deserves the name of faithful.

2. *Filial Obedience ought to be ready and cheerful.*

This is the only obedience which commends itself to the common sense of mankind, or which is of any value in the sight of God. In this obedience the heart is concerned, and the child active. Every thing else, which goes under this name, is constrained; hypocritical; a cheat; a sin. No other is regarded in the Scriptures. To sustain this character, the obedience of children should be rendered without opposition, and without delay. A great part of the value of Filial Obedience arises from the manner, in which it is rendered. *God* himself *loves the cheerful giver.* Mankind have exactly the same views of this subject; and universally consider that, which is done grudgingly, as little better, and often worse, than if it had not been done at all.

III. *Children are bound to do whatever will reasonably contribute to the happiness of their parents, whether commanded or not.*

The modes, in which this part of filial duty is to be rendered, are so numerous, that it is impossible to recite them. It will be sufficient to observe, at the present time, that no filial piety is more lovely, or more accordant with the text, than that which attentively prevents the wants, the commands, and the wishes, of parents; which adds to their comforts, and lessens their troubles, in a thou-

sand indescribable ways, readily offering themselves to the mind of a dutiful child.

One of the happiest modes of obeying the text is found in *the discreet, amiable, and virtuous behaviour of children.* Parents are delightfully honoured, when their children exhibit excellent conduct before mankind; and thus acquire the approbation and goodwill of those around them. In this case they render a very pleasing, and very honourable, tribute to the parental wisdom, care, and faithfulness, employed in their education; and show in the strongest manner, that the precepts, by which they have been trained up, have been received by them with such reverence and piety, as to have a commanding influence upon their lives. In this manner children become *the glory of* their *parents*, and *the crown of grey hairs.*

The duties of children obviously change with the change of age and circumstances. When they are very young, their obedience, as I remarked, must be implicit. They are to obey without investigation, inquiry, or doubt; for this plain reason, that they are incapable, altogether, of judging for themselves. But they are to be taught to judge, as early as their years and understanding will permit. This is indispensable; because by learning, habitually, the reasons on which their parents' commands are founded, they will soon learn to think, that they are all reasonable; and obey them with more readiness, and exactness, on this account; and because many cases will occur, in which their parents cannot be present, and in which, therefore, they must judge for themselves. This, it is plain, they cannot do, unless they are taught. *As they advance in years and understanding*, the nature of their obedience will vary, chiefly from this circumstance, that they understand their duty, and the reasons on which it is founded; and are therefore required to perform it from a due regard to its nature and importance, to the law of God which established it, and to the character and kindness of their parents which demand it from their reverence and their gratitude. In other respects, their obedience is founded on the same principles, during the whole period of their non-age.

Nor do the same rules apply to them in a very different manner, *after they have arrived at adult years;* so long as they continue in their father's house, and are members of his family. In this situation, however, the circumstances of both parents and children vary so much, that the relations and duties of both are usually modified by some plan, or compact, between them, sufficiently understood to serve as a rule, by which the conduct of the child is to be directed. I shall, therefore, think it necessary only to observe, that, when children have faithfully performed their duty to this period, they rarely fail of performing it afterwards.

When children have left their father's house; their circumstances become more materially changed, and with them, in several respects, their duties. They then have separate interests, and business of their own; and usually families also. When God instituted marriage, he authorized children to leave the house, and government, of their parents. *For this cause*, said the Creator, *shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.* Matthew xix. 4, 5. In this situation, then, children become parents, heads of families, invested with all the authority, possessed of all the rights, and subjected to all the duties, pertaining to their own parents. It is impossible, that in these circumstances they should fulfil their former duties, as children under the government of their parents, unless they neglect those, which are indispensable in their present situation. From many of these duties, therefore, they are released.

Still; as they are more indebted to their parents than to any other human beings, and incomparably more indebted, at least in ordinary cases; their remaining duties to their parents are numerous and important. In this situation, more frequently than any other, they are required to contribute to the maintenance of their parents. This is made by our Saviour to be so important a branch of the command in our text, that he declares the *Pharisees*, who by a fraudulent comment on this precept had released men from the duty in question, to have *made this command of God of none effect by their tradition.* In this period, also, they are bound as much as may be, to nurse and sooth their parents in pain and sickness; to bear patiently and kindly their infirmities of body and mind; to alleviate their distresses; to give them the cheering influence of their company and conversation; and in these and various other ways to serene and brighten the evening, but too frequently a melancholy one, of old age.

The children of sinful parents have always a difficult task to perform. To a pious child, a parent, visibly going down in the broad and crooked road that leads to destruction, is a sight beyond measure distressing. That a child, thus situated, is bound in every discreet and efficacious manner to prevent, as far as may be, the awful catastrophe, will not be questioned, unless by an atheist. What is to be done in so dreadful a case, it will be impossible to prescribe here, unless in very general terms. Every child will know indeed, without information, that his prayers are to be offered up for his parent, and his own pious example presented to him, without ceasing. Every child also knows, that all his own measures, whatever they may be in other respects, are to be obedient, modest, and reverential. No other measures can, in these circumstances, be hopefully followed by any good consequences. Still, they may be sufficiently plain and unequivocal as to their meaning.

Among the efforts, made by such a child in addition to his own discreet personal conduct and conversation, few seem better fitted to answer the end in view, than inducing persons, possessed of known wisdom and piety, especially those of an engaging deportment, frequently to visit the parent, and persuading him also often to visit them; placing books of a religious nature, written in a pleasing and interesting manner, within his reach; alluring him regularly to the house of God, and to private religious assemblies; and introducing without any apparent design, religious topics, especially those which are peculiarly interesting, as often as may be with propriety. In my own view, the child is also bound modestly, submissively, and discreetly, to remonstrate against the visible wickedness of the parent. I can see no reason, which will justify a child in the omission of this duty; although I am not unaware of the peculiar difficulties which attend it, nor unapprised of the peculiar delicacy, and prudence, which it demands. Reproof, even from equals, or superiors, requires more skill, and care, in order to render it successful, than fall to the lot of most men. In a child to a parent it must be singularly embarrassing.

A less delicate task, yet still attended with many difficulties, lies in avoiding the influence, naturally presented, and often but too efficaciously, by the sentiments, precepts, and examples, of evil parents. The parental character is so venerable, so authoritative, so endearing, and so persuasive, that the child, who escapes its malignant influence, when employed to encourage sin, may well be considered as eminently the object of the divine favour. Still it is possible; and has existed in multiplied instances. *Abijah* escaped even in the house of *Jeroboam*; *Hezekiah* in that of *Ahaz*; and *Josiah* in that of *Amon*. Thus, also, has the fact often been in all succeeding ages of time. Children, therefore, instead of despairing, should gird themselves with watchfulness and resolution, suited to their circumstances; should continually, and fervently, beseech God to guard them by his good Spirit from the dangers, in which they stand; should watch their own conduct with peculiar anxiety; should seek for wisdom, and direction, from religious books, especially from the Scriptures; and should ask advice, countenance, and assistance, from those among their friends who are persons of piety. The company of such persons counteracts, in a manner invaluable, the influence of evil example. *He that walketh with wise men*, says God, *shall be wise*.

Having thus given a summary account of the Duties of children, I shall now proceed to mention several Reasons to enforce them.

1. *Every considerate child will feel his filial duty strongly urged by the Excellence of this conduct, and the Odiousness of filial impiety.*

This is one of the few moral subjects, concerning which all men are agreed. The writers of all ages and of all countries, have taught us with a single voice, that to the common eye of mankind, no object is more amiable, or more delightful, than a dutiful and virtuous child. This charming object commends itself, at first view, to the natural feelings, the judgment, and the conscience, of all men. It commends itself at once, without deliberation, and without doubt. It has commended itself to persons of every character, in every age, and in every country. It is esteemed: it is loved. The affection which it excites, and the reputation, which it produces, are sincere, solid, and permanent. Nothing more certainly generates esteem: nothing more uniformly creates friends. It is a kind of glory, surrounding the child, wherever he goes, seen, felt, and acknowledged, by all men, and conferring a distinction, otherwise unattainable. All persons presage well of such a child: and he is expected, of course, to fill every station, to which his talents are suited, with propriety, and honour.

An undutiful child, on the contrary, brands his own character with odiousness and infamy. No person sees him, or thinks of him, without pain and disgust. No parent is willing, that his own children should become his companions. The vilest persons regard him with contempt and abhorrence; the best, with pity and indignation. A parent, on his death-bed, hardly knows how to ask a blessing for him: and those, who survive, are still more unable to believe it will descend upon his head.

2. *Considerate children will find another powerful reason for filial duty in the Pleasure, which it gives their parents.*

Nothing, which takes place in human life, creates a higher, more genuine, or more unmingled, pleasure in the minds of parents, than the pious and dutiful conduct of their children. It is indeed impossible, that a child should form adequate conceptions of the delight, which such conduct awakens in the parental heart. Experience only can completely teach the nature of this emotion. Still, children cannot but know, that their parents in this manner find exquisite enjoyment; nor can they be ignorant, that to produce it is one of their own chief blessings, as well as one of their indispensable duties. Filial Piety is a continual feast; an ample reward for every parental care, toil, watching, anxiety, and prayer. It sweetens all the bitterness of human life; and adds an exquisite relish to every comfort. The burdens of life it makes light and easy; and is the most supporting stay, on this side of heaven, to the weary steps of declining age.

An undutiful child, on the other hand, is *a broken reed, on which, if a man lean, it shall thrust through his hand, and pierce him. A foolish son is a heaviness* alike *to his* father and *his mother;* a spot on their character; a trial of their patience; a blast upon their hopes; a nuisance to their family; and a thorn in their hearts.

3. *The demands of Gratitude present a combination of such reasons to every such child, for the same conduct.*

Parental love is unrivalled by any affection of the human breast in its strength, its tenderness, its patience, its permanency, and its cheerful self-denial. The labours which it undergoes, and the willingness with which it undergoes them, are unexampled in the concerns of man. No other affection toils with the same readiness and patience, or voluntarily encounters the same watchings, cares, pains, and anxieties. None prompts so many prayers: none awakens so many tears. Most of human life, after we arrive at adult age, is spent in providing for the wants, alleviating the sufferings, removing the diseases, furnishing the education, guarding the conduct, securing the safety, accomplishing the settlement, and promoting the salvation, of children. More is done by parents, and daily done, than children can ever realize, until they are called to do the same things for their own offspring. All, at the same time, are efforts of tenderness merely. These efforts are almost without number; this tenderness almost without degree. What child, who remembers that he is indebted to his parents for his being, and under God for almost every blessing which he enjoys, for almost all that he is, and almost all that he has, can fail to feel, and to acknowledge, that the utmost, which he can do in the proper course of filial piety, is an imperfect requital for such affections, and such blessings, as these? That there are such *beings* I am reluctantly compelled to confess. *Children* they ought not to be called. They are unworthy of the name. They are monstrous productions, out of the course of nature; and, like all such productions, fill the mind only with loathing and horror. Let such children remember, that they are objects of still more abhorrence to God, than to men. Let them remember, that this great and awful Being, who has styled himself the Father of mankind, and who has imaged his own tenderness for his creatures by that of a father to his children, will, at the final day, vindicate the parental rights in a terrible manner by inflicting the severest punishment on undutiful children.

4. *The great Advantages of filial piety present strong reasons for the practice of it to children of every character.*

Of the text *St. Paul* observes, when enjoining the duties of it upon the children of the *Ephesian* Christians, that *it is the first Commandment with promise.* Accordingly, he urges their obedience to it upon the very ground of this promise, that *their days also might be long upon the land, which the Lord their God had given them.* This promise, therefore, to such an extent, that an Apostle thought proper to urge it upon the *Ephesian* Christians, extends to the Gentiles. The promises to the *Jews*, in most instances, announced temporal blessings only. Those, which are made to Christians, chiefly convey spiritual blessings. But that, which is contained in the text, conveys temporal blessings also. In con-

versing with the plain people of this country, distinguished for their good sense, and careful observation of facts, I have found them, to a great extent, firmly persuaded of the verification of this promise in our own days; and ready to produce a variety of proofs from cases, in which they have seen the blessing realized. Their opinion on this subject is mine; and with their experience my own has coincided.

Indeed, no small measure of prosperity seems ordinarily *interwoven* with a course of filial piety. The comfort which it insures to parents, the harmony which it produces in the family, the peace which it yields to the conscience, are all essential ingredients of happiness. To these it adds the approbation of every beholder, the possession of a fair and lasting reputation; the confidence, and good-will of every worthy man; and, of consequence, an opportunity of easily gaining those useful employments, which worthy men have to give. Beyond this, it naturally associates with itself that temperance, moderation, and sobriety, which furnish a solid foundation for health and long life. In my own apprehension, however, these are not *all* its blessings. I do not believe, that miracles are wrought for its reward. Neither will I say, that purer gales breathe, to preserve its health; nor that softer suns arise, or more timely rains descend, to mature its harvests; nor that more propitious winds blow, to waft its ships home in safety. But I will say, that on the tide of providence multiplied blessings are borne into its possession, at seasons when they are unexpected, in ways unforeseen, and by means unprovided by its own forecast, which are often of high importance; which altogether, constitute a rich proportion of prosperity; and which, usually, are not found by persons of the contrary character.

At the same time, those, who act well as children, almost of course act well as men and women; and thus have taken, without design, the cion of happiness from the parental stock, and grafted it upon other stems, which bear fruit abundantly to themselves. Here, in the language of Dr. Watts,

> "It revives, and bears
> A train of blessings for their heirs."

It is also never to be forgotten, that filial piety, if derived from an evangelical source, is entitled to the peculiar favour of God in the present world, and to the everlasting blessings of the world to come.

5. *The Declarations of God concerning this important subject, furnish reasons at once alluring and awful, for the exercise of filial piety.*

The text is an illustrious example of this nature, of the most persuasive kind. Deut xxi. 18, gives us a terrible one concerning the stubborn and rebellious son. *The eye,* says *Agur, that*

mocketh at his father, and refuseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

One of the most interesting accounts of this subject to be found in the Scriptures, as it has struck my mind, is exhibited in the 35th Chapter of *Jeremiah*. *Jonadab*, the son of *Rechab*, commanded his children, and their posterity, *neither to drink wine, nor to build houses, nor to sow seed, nor to plant vineyards, but to dwell in tents from generation to generation.* The *Rechabites* obeyed his voice; and, at the time of Jeremiah, had, for three hundred years, lived in the manner which their Ancestor enjoined. As a reward of their obedience, the Prophet *Jeremiah* was sent unto the *Rechabites* with this remarkable message. *Thus saith* JEHOVAH *of hosts, the God of Israel; because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab, your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you; therefore thus saith* JEHOVAH *of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.*

6. *The Example of Christ is a reason, of the highest import, to compel the exercise of filial piety.*

This wonderful person, notwithstanding his great and glorious character, and sublime destination, was the fairest specimen of obedience to parents, ever seen in the present world. Let children remember, that, *if they have not the Spirit of Christ, they are none of his.* He was subject to his parents, as a child of their family, until he was thirty years of age; and forgot not, when he hung on the cross, to provide an effectual support and protection for his Mother. Let all children remember, when they are weary of labouring for *their* parents, that Christ laboured for *his;* when they are impatient of their commands, that Christ cheerfully obeyed; when they are reluctant to provide for their parents, that Christ forgot himself, and provided for his mother, amid the agonies of crucifixion. The affectionate language of this Divine example to every child is, *Go thou, and do likewise.*

SERMON CXI.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT.—DUTY OF PARENTS.

PROVERBS xxii. 6.—*Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

IN the preceding discourse, I gave a brief account of *the Duties of Children*. I shall now proceed to consider the *Duties of Parents*. This, also, I must consider in a very summary manner, notwithstanding the copiousness, and importance, of the subject.

In this passage of Scripture, parents are directed to *train up their children in the way in which they should go*: and, to encourage them to this duty, a promise is given, that their children, if trained in this way, *will not depart from it*. The word, *train*, originally denotes *to draw along by a regular and steady course of exertions*; and is, hence, very naturally used to signify *drawing from one action to another by persuasions, promises and other efforts, continually repeated*. In a loose and general sense, therefore, it may easily include all the duties of Parents to their children.

The way in which a child should go, is undoubtedly the way, in which it is best for him to go, with respect both to his temporal and eternal well-being.

These duties are customarily, and justly, distributed under *three heads*:

The Maintenance;
The Education; and,
The Settlement; of Children.

The Maintenance of Children must unquestionably be such, as the circumstances of the parents will admit, consistently with the dictates of prudence; and such as will secure comfort to their children. Their food and raiment, their employments and gratifications, ought to be all such, as to promote their health. They are carefully to be nursed in sickness, and guarded from danger. Their enjoyments of every kind ought invariably to be innocent; reasonable in their number and degree; evident testimonies of parental wisdom, as well as of parental affection; such as shall prevent them from suffering unnecessary mortification; and such as shall not flatter pride, foster avarice, or encourage sloth or sensuality. They ought also to be such, as to place them upon the same level with the children of other discreet parents in similar circumstances.

The education of children involves their *Instruction*, and *Government*.

The Instruction of children includes,

The Things, which they are to be taught; and,
The Manner of teaching them.

The Things, which Children are to be taught, may be distributed under the two heads of *Natural Knowledge;* and *Moral Knowledge.*

Natural Knowledge includes,

1. *Their Learning.*

By this I intend *every thing, which they are to gain from books: whether it be Learning, appropriately so called,* or *the knowledge of Arts and Sciences.* Of this subject I observe, generally, that, like the Maintenance of Children, it must comport with the circumstances of the Parents. It ought, also, to be suited to the character, talents, and destination, of the Child. But an acquaintance with Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, is indispensably necessary to every Child. It is indispensable, that every child should read the Scriptures; highly important, that he should read other religious books; and very useful, that he should enlarge his mind by such diversified knowledge, as may render him beneficial to himself and to mankind.

2. *Natural Knowledge includes, also, an acquaintance with at least some one kind of useful Business.*

Ordinarily, this acquaintance can be gained only in *the practical manner;* that is, by placing the child, at an early period of life, in the business, which is to be learned. After he has been instructed in Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, which are indispensable to the advantageous prosecution of every kind of business, he should be required *to do the very business, in which he is to be educated.*

There is no greater mistake on the part of rich parents, than their neglect of educating their children to the thorough knowledge of some useful business. It is often observed, and generally felt, that such an education is unnecessary, because their children are to inherit fortunes. The children also feel and are taught by their parents to feel, that such an education is utterly unnecessary for themselves. Both, at the same time, are but too apt to consider active employments, and even the knowledge necessary to direct them, as humiliating, and disgraceful, to the children. These are very great mistakes; the dictates of pride and vanity, and not of good sense. Were nothing but the present prosperity of children to be regarded; they ought invariably to be educated in the knowledge of useful business. Almost all the wealth in this country is in the hands of those, who have acquired it by their own industry: and almost all those, who inherit fortunes, dissipate them in early life; and spend their remaining days in poverty and humiliation. Ignorance of business; and its consequences, idleness and profusion; will easily, and in a short time, scatter any estate. A fortune is a pond, the waters of which will soon run out: well-directed industry is a spring, whose streams are perennial.

Besides, the man, who pursues no useful business, is without significance, and without reputation. The sound common sense of mankind will never annex character to useless life. He who merely hangs as a burden on the shoulders of his fellow-men; who adds nothing to the common stock of comfort, and merely spends his time in devouring it; will invariably, as well as justly, be accounted a public nuisance.

Beyond all this, every parent is bound by his duty to God, and his children, to educate them to useful business, in order to enable them to perform their own duty; to become blessings both to themselves and mankind; and to possess the rational enjoyments, furnished by a life of industrious activity; in their very nature incomprehensibly superior to sloth and profusion.

Moral Knowledge is all included, as well as enjoined, in the Scriptures. It is also, in its own nature, either directly, or indirectly, all practical.

Knowledge of this kind is naturally distributed under the following heads:

1. *Piety.*

To this head belongs *Reverence to God.* Every child should be taught, from the beginning, to fear that great and glorious Being, to whom he owes his existence, his blessings, and his hopes. This knowledge is indispensable to all rectitude of character. As I have considered the general nature of this subject in a former discourse; I shall only observe here, that nothing will, in an equal degree, secure a child from sin; strengthen him against the force of temptation; or fix his feet immoveably in the path of righteousness.

Inseparably connected with this subject is *a sense of Accountableness.* Every child should know, as soon as he is capable of knowing, that he is a Moral being in a state of probation, for his conduct, in which he will be hereafter judged and rewarded; that God is an eye-witness to all his secret and open conduct alike; and that every thing, which he speaks, thinks, or does, will be the foundation of his final reward. Proper impressions of these two great subjects, habitually made in the early periods of childhood, will influence the life more than any other considerations; will revive, after they have been long thought to have been forgotten; and will produce happy effects, when all other causes have lost their power.

With the same care, *should children be accustomed to read the Scriptures, whenever they have become able to read.* Here they will find these great subjects, as well as all others of a similar nature, placed in the strongest light, and taught in the most perfect manner: a manner suited to every mind, capable of understanding such subjects at all. Here, particularly, facts, and characters, of a moral nature, are exhibited with a felicity altogether unrivalled. With both of these, children are delighted; and fasten on both

with that peculiar earnestness, which prevents them from being ever obliterated. As they are presented in the Scriptures, they are eminently entertaining to children; and to a great extent, are set in so obvious a light, as to be easily understood even by very young minds.

Every child should be taught, also, *that he is a sinner; and, as such, exposed to the anger of God.* The efficacy of this instruction upon the early mind is of the most desirable nature. Nothing more successfully checks the growth of pride; the most universal, the most pleasing, the most operative, and the most mischievous, of all the human passions. Without this instruction, also, all other religious teaching will be in vain. He, who is not conscious that he is a sinner, will never take a single step towards salvation. Happily, children very easily receive and admit, this instruction. In the earlier periods of life the conscience is so far unbiassed, and possesses so great power, as to induce the heart, however reluctant in itself, regularly to acknowledge the truth of this important doctrine.

As soon as it is practicable, every child should be conducted to the knowledge of the Saviour. On the infinite importance of this indispensable knowledge I need not here dwell. Suffice it to observe, that children will sooner imbibe this knowledge, than parents are usually aware; and that childhood is, often, the only opportunity for obtaining it, which they ever enjoy.

Finally, *children should be carefully instructed in all the external duties of Piety.* They should be effectually as well as unceasingly taught to mention the name of God, and every thing obviously related to this awful Being with profound Reverence only; to observe the Sabbath, from the beginning to the end, with religious exactness; to be present punctilicusly at the public worship of God, and to attend to all the ordinances of it with reverence and care; to attend in the same manner upon family worship; and in the same manner to perform, regularly, every morning and every evening, the duty of secret prayer.

All these things should be explained to children in such a manner, as to render their views of them just, and rational, and their practice of them Evangelical, and not a mere matter of form.

2. *Morality; or the Duties, which respect our fellow-men.*

Among these, *Truth should hold the first place.* As I expect speedily to examine the nature and importance of this subject, as well as most others which will be mentioned in this discussion; it will be unnecessary to expatiate upon them at present. It will be sufficient to say here, that a profound and reverential regard to truth should be awakened in the mind of a child, from the moment when he begins to assert any thing; that no variations from it, either in jest or in earnest, should ever be permitted to pass without animadversion; that its nature and importance should be explained to the child, as soon as he is able to understand them; that

resistance to falsehood and prevarication should invariably be made unconditionally, and without any abatement; that this resistance should be made in every hopeful manner, and to every necessary degree, and should never cease, until the veracity of the child shall be effectually secured; that every encouragement to veracity, which prudence can suggest, should be holden out to him continually; and that a rigid example of speaking truth, and fulfilling promises, should be set before him by all, with whom he corresponds, especially by the parents and the family, without any variation from it, either in reality or appearance; that all seeming departures from it should be carefully explained to him; and that he should be obliged to fulfil all his promises, if not unlawful, however inconvenient the fulfilment may be to the parents, or to him.

Justice, by which I intend *Commutative Justice, is a kindred virtue to truth; and should be taught, from the same period, with the same care.* Every child should be taught to pay all his debts and fulfil all his contracts, exactly in the manner, completely in the value, and punctually at the time. Every child should be discouraged from the propensity to make bargains; so early, so strongly, and so universally, visible. He should be discouraged, also, from every wish to make what is called *a good bargain;* the common source of all cheating; and should be taught, that he is bound to render an equivalent for what he receives. Every bargain, disadvantageous to himself, he should be bound scrupulously to fulfil. Every thing, which he has borrowed, he should be obliged to return, uninjured, at the time: and every thing belonging to others, which he has lost, he should be required to replace. In this manner he will grow up to that sense of justice, without which it is impossible for virtue to exist.

Morality, begun in *truth*, and advanced in *justice*, is finished in *Kindness*. The minds of children may be easily rendered kind by a wise cultivation; and by the want of it will easily become unfeeling and cruel. Children should be taught, the first moment they are capable of being taught, a lively tenderness for the feelings, the sufferings, and the happiness, of all beings, with whom they are conversant. The Emperor *Domitian* has proved, that cruelty, when it cannot satiate itself on human misery, can be gratified even with the death of flies. Every child should be invariably instructed to exercise kindness towards animals, and to shun cruelty even to an insect. The plundering of birds' nests, and the capture of their young, is in all ordinary cases, notwithstanding it is so generally allowed, an employment, fitted only to harden the heart, and prepare it to be insensible to human sufferings. Still worse is the deplorable practice, extensively allowed also, of setting up poultry as a mark, to be destroyed by gradual torture. Worse still is the practice, so widely and shamefully extended in some parts of this country, of cock-fighting; abomina-

ble for its cruelty, and detestable for its fraud. Children should never injure animals without reproof solemnly administered, nor, as the case may be, without punishment. All their unkindness to each other, and all the unkindness of others which falls within their knowledge, should be strongly and unconditionally reprobated. At the same time, every instance of their spontaneous tenderness, and beneficence, should be strongly commended; and, as prudence may direct, followed by suitable rewards; while every instance of cruelty should be treated with efficacious discountenance, and strenuous opposition; and should be seen to awaken in the mind of the parent detestation and horror. Among the exercises of kindness, which are of prime importance, one of the most difficult to learn is the forgiveness of injuries. On this account it should be taught early, unceasingly, and strenuously, with powerful persuasion, and distinguishing rewards. An unforgiving and revengeful spirit, on the contrary, should, however difficult and discouraging the task, be at all events broken down; and no attempt should be omitted, until this work is effectually accomplished.

3. *Self-Government.*

Children should, from the beginning, be taught to be industrious. The value of time should be explained to them, as the means of all usefulness and enjoyment, of duty and salvation. To enable them to employ it in the best manner, they should be early accustomed to methodize it by useful divisions; allotting regularly one period to devotion, another to business, and another to recreation. Their business, also, should be methodized by subordinate divisions: one period being regularly destined to one employment, and another to another. In this manner they will soon see, that far more can be accomplished, than by loose and desultory efforts. Industry, naturally disagreeable, may be rendered pleasing by address and habituation, advice and example. As this is the fountain, under God, of all human attainments, and enjoyments; no exertions should be left untried to establish it, at a very early date, in the minds of children.

Upon Industry, in his child, every parent should graft Economy. To economy, the human mind is more reluctant, than even to industry. In order to relish it, two great difficulties must be overcome. One is the powerful relish for the gratifications, which occasion our expense. The other is the constant, laborious attention, so necessary to the practice of that branch of economy which is employed in preserving the various kinds of property. The latter of these is usually the greater difficulty; but may, as well as the other, be overcome by long-continued, prudent, and unremitted exertion.

The children of the honest and industrious poor, and of persons in moderate circumstances, are usually taught economy from necessity; in most instances, however, not so thoroughly, and hap-

pily, as ought to be wished. The children of opulent parents, and of the idle poor, are, to a great extent, sadly neglected, as to this necessary part of their education. The consequence is, that the children of the one are kept poor, and the children of the other frequently reduced to poverty. Economy is at least as necessary to prosperity, even in a moderate degree, as Industry itself. Equally necessary is it to furnish us the power of doing justice to others; safely from temptations to fraud, falsehood, and innumerable other evils; support in sickness, and old age; the education, and comfortable settlement, of our families; and a host of other blessings. It is, therefore, an indispensable duty; and is made such by the example, and precept, of our Saviour. When he had fed a multitude by a creative act of his own, he directed his disciples to *gather up the fragments, that nothing might be lost.* What was their duty, in such a case, is certainly the duty of all men, in all cases: and, however it may be despised by the proud, and the prodigal, or however forgotten by the thoughtless, will be found of incalculable importance to their children.

At the same time, they should be carefully guarded against all tendencies to covetousness, and to every other exercise of a mean and narrow mind. Economy furnishes us with the ability to perform generous acts. Meanness prevents their existence; and destroys the spirit, from which they spring. Meanness, also, roots up, in whatever form it may exist, all the tendencies to virtue; every stem, on which it may be hopefully grafted.

Another, thing, which ought to be cultivated with great care in the early minds of children, and which may be properly ranged under this head, is *the exercise of the Gentle affections.* Violent affections seem to be the chief preventives of virtue, and its chief enemies. Gentle affections are the best preparation for it; and the best friends to it, which are furnished by human nature. All the affections of virtue are *ordinarily* gentle; the most amiable ones *always.* This is probably one powerful reason, why so many more Christians are usually found in the female sex, than in ours; viz. that the softness and sweetness of their affections naturally coincide with religious impressions; while the violence of ours naturally resist them. Children should regularly be checked, and subdued, in every ebullition of passion; particularly of pride and anger. Nor should they be less carefully opposed in the more unobserved progress of avarice and ambition. The mischiefs of these, and of all other inordinate passions, are known, and acknowledged, by all men. It will be only necessary to remark concerning them here, that, while they continue in full strength, they absolutely forbid all access of Religion, and fix the mind in immoveable hostility to the divine pleasure. He, who wishes his children to become the subjects of piety, should make it a prime object in their education, to check all their inordinate passions with an efficacy of resistance, proportioned to the demands of each case; and should, with equal

anxiety, teach them to check, restrain, and subdue, themselves. Usually, this work may in early childhood be easily done; but unhappily is too often neglected. The passions in the mind, like weeds in a garden, sufficiently tender and feeble at first, soon strengthen themselves to such a degree by rankness of growth, that to subdue them becomes difficult, if not impossible. Few persons have, then, sufficient resolution to undertake the task: fewer have sufficient perseverance to execute it. When begun in season, it is ordinarily attended with little difficulty.

Gentle affections should be encouraged in children by all the means in our power. They should constantly witness them in *us*. The exercise of them, in themselves, should from time to time be commended; the amiableness of them explained, and enforced. Companions, possessed of such affections, should be selected for them; and books, containing persuasive examples, and illustrations, of this character, should be put into their hands.

Intimately connected with this subject is *Civility and Sweetness of manners*. Lord *Chesterfield* justly observes, that such manners are directly required by our Saviour's practical exposition of the second great Command of the moral law: *That we should do to others whatsoever we would that they should do to us*. All men love to be *treated* with civility; and are bound, therefore, by the law of God, to exhibit such treatment to others. The *Chinese* proverbially, and justly, observe that a man without civility is a man without common sense. Such manners are the proper polish of that most beautiful of all diamonds, Virtue; and enable it to shine with its own peculiar lustre. They render the character lovely; increase exceedingly the power of those who possess them, to do good; and secure to them a thousand kind offices, to which coarse, rough, and brutal men are utterly strangers. Children, in order to be taught such manners, besides being particularly instructed in their nature, should, especially, be accustomed to the company of those, from whom they may be successfully copied.

There is scarcely a fault, to which children are prone, which is more difficult to be prevented, than *the Imprudence of the Tongue*. Passion prompts them to expressions of rashness and violence; example, to profaneness; the love of being listened to, to the betraying of secrets, the telling of marvellous stories, the recitation of private history, and the utterance of slander. In these and other similar ways they often wound their own character, and the peace both of themselves and their connexions. Every attempt of every such kind ought to be repelled at once, and effectually crushed. Neglect, here, is countenance; inattention, encouragement. What, then, shall be said of parents, who directly listen to their children, while thus employed; and in this manner solicit them to transgress? Few evils need to be more steadily watched, or more powerfully resisted, than this. A prudent and

well-governed tongue is an invaluable possession; whether we consider the peace of the possessor, the comfort of his family, or the quietness of his neighbourhood. *A busy-body in other men's matters* is classed by *St. Peter* with *murderers, thieves, and malefactors.*

Universally, *children should be guarded, and taught to guard themselves, with the utmost care, against temptations.* They should be cautioned not to go, and restrained from going, to places of evil resort. They should be anxiously prevented from the company of wicked children; and, as much as may be, from that of all other persons, from whom they will hear dangerous sentiments, or who will set before them dangerous conduct. They should also be never brought, when it can be avoided, into contact with dangerous and fascinating objects. From such objects indeed, and from such company, they cannot be entirely secluded, in such a world as this. By watchful and faithful parents, however, much may be done: it is impossible to say how much: but probably so much, as, in ordinary cases at least, perhaps in all, to secure the child from the evil, to which he is exposed. One important mean of security, never to be forgotten, is an early, strong, and habitual impression of their exposure to temptation, accompanied by explicit and thorough information of the evils, which will certainly result from yielding to its influence. This will prove a safeguard to the child, when the parent cannot be present, to warn him of his danger.

It will be remembered, that I originally proposed to mention a part only of those things, which are to be taught to children. Those, which have been mentioned, are, if I mistake not, possessed of distinguished importance; and will, I suppose, be acknowledged to claim a primary place in parental instruction. I shall now proceed to consider *the Manner, in which they should be taught.*

1. *The Instruction of Children should be begun in very Early life.*

Very young children are capable of learning many things of incalculable importance to themselves. All parents appear to me to labour under serious mistakes with regard to this subject; and begin to teach their children many things, at least, at a later period than that in which *they* would advantageously begin to receive them. The infant mind opens faster, than we are apt to be aware. This is the true reason, why very young children are almost always thought peculiarly bright and promising. We customarily attribute this opinion to parental fondness; in some degree perhaps, justly; but it arises extensively from the fact, that the intellect of little children outruns in its progress our utmost expectations: the goodness of God intending, I suppose, to provide by this constitution of things the means of receiving the instruction, so indispensable to children at that period. Of this advantage every

parent should carefully avail himself. At the same time he should remember, that this is the season for making lasting impressions. The infant mind lays strong hold of every thing, which it is taught. Both its understanding and affections are then unoccupied. The affections are then, also, remarkably susceptible, tender, and vigorous. Every person knows the peculiarly impressive power of novelty. On the infant mind every thing is powerfully impressed, because every thing is new. From these causes is derived that remarkable fact, so commonly observed, that early impressions influence the character and the life beyond all others; and remain strong and vivid, after most others are worn away.

From these remarks must be seen, with irresistible evidence, the immense importance of seizing this happy period, to make religious impressions on the minds of our offspring. He, who loses this season, is a husbandman, who wastes the spring in idleness, and sows in midsummer. How can such a man rationally expect a crop? To the efforts of the parent, at this period, the professed Instructer is bound to add his own. The Instructer, who in a school, a college, or an university, does not employ the opportunities, which he enjoys, of making religious impressions on the minds of his pupils, neglects a prime part of his duty; and so far wraps his talent in a napkin, and buries it in the earth.

2. *Children should be Gradually instructed.*

Knowledge plainly should be communicated in that progressive course, in which the mind is most capable of receiving it. The first things which children attain, are *words*, and *facts*. To these succeed, after no great interval, *plain doctrines, and precepts*. As they advance in years and understanding, they gradually comprehend, and therefore relish, doctrines of a more complicated and difficult nature. This order of things, being inwrought in the constitution of the human mind, should be exactly followed. When it is counteracted, or forgotten, the task of instruction will ever be difficult; and the progress of the pupil slow and discouraging. A loose and general attention to this great rule of instruction seems to have prevailed in most enlightened countries, but a far less accurate one, than its importance deserves.

Among the facts and doctrines, suited to the early mind, none are imbibed with more readiness, or fastened upon with more strength, than the existence, presence, perfection, and providence, of God: the Creation of all things by his power; its own accountableness to him; and the immense importance of his favour, and, therefore, of acting in such a manner as to obtain his approbation. These things, then, together with such as are inseparably connected with them, should, without fail, be always taught at the dawn of the understanding.

3. *The impressions, which are useful to children, should be made Continually.*

Children, more than any other persons, need *line upon line, and precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little.* It is in no sense sufficient to have taught them either truths, or duties. The parent's duty is, *then*, only begun. He is not only to teach, but to inculcate; to recall what has been forgotten; to explain what has been imperfectly apprehended; to rectify what has been misunderstood, to illustrate what has been obscure; and to enforce what has been unfelt. A few minds are, indeed, so happily susceptible, as readily to understand, deeply to feel, and permanently to retain, most of that, which they are taught. But such minds are rare, and solitary. Almost all children demand, and ought to receive, instruction in the manner here recommended.

4. *Instruction should be communicated to children, with unwearied patience.*

Christ, in this and many other respects, has left Instructers a perfect example. Although his disciples were *dull of hearing, and slow of heart to believe;* although they had many, and those often very unreasonable, prejudices; his patience was never lessened. He taught them in the gradual manner, which I have recommended; *as*, in his own language, *they were able to bear.* He taught them, also, without weariness, without fretfulness, without discouragement, without reproaches, and without intermission. At times, indeed, he reproved them, and with some degree of severity; but always with tenderness and good-will.

In this manner should parents teach their children; should be patient with their ignorance, their backwardness to receive instruction, their mistakes, their forgetfulness, the necessity of teaching them again and again, and the doubts and difficulties, which from time to time they suggest. In all this, the parents should manifest not only quietness of mind, but cheerfulness, and willingness to repeat their instructions.

5. *Instructions should be given Persuasively.*

Children are often discouraged from learning by being compelled to this employment, and punished for not learning; by the gloomy countenance, morose temper, and forbidding manners, of the Instructer; by being unreasonably confined, and unreasonably debarred from those harmless gratifications, which are necessary to preserve their health and spirits; and not unfrequently by the imposition of harder tasks, than they are able to perform. If I supposed such persons to act understandingly; I should believe, that they intended to prevent children from learning; and that their measures were skilfully contrived for this purpose. But to the end, for which they are professedly adopted, they could scarcely be fitted in a more unhappy manner.

To most children learning may be made an alluring object. Pleasantness of disposition, affability, condescension, serenity of countenance, and sweetness of manners, in the Instructer; engaging books, moderate tasks, reasonable confinement to study, a

proper allowance of recreation, commendation kindly given when merited, and well-directed rewards for improvement; are usually sufficient persuasives to engage children in a spontaneous and pleasurable course of learning. The Instructer, who will not follow this course, must be very imperfectly fitted for his employment.

6. *Children should be taught by Example.*

All men will admit, that the moral branches of education can never be taught successfully without the aid of Example. Example has, in a great measure, the same influence on every other part of education. *Children do little, beside imitating others.* Parents, who read, will have reading children. Industrious parents will have industrious children. Lying parents will have lying children. Example, therefore, is of the highest possible consequence in this important concern.

7. *Children should be taught in such a manner, as to be prompted unceasingly to the most vigorous exertion of their own talents.*

The human mind is not a mere vessel, into which knowledge is to be poured. It is better compared to a bee, fed during the first periods of its existence by the labours of others; but intended, ere long, to lift its wings in the active employment of collecting sweets from every field within its reach. To such excursions, and to the accomplishment of such purposes, the mind should be early and sedulously allured. This is the only way to give it energy and strength. Without the active exercise of its powers, neither body, nor mind, can acquire vigour. Without bodily exertions, *Goliath*, six cubits high, would have been only a gigantic boy: without mental efforts, *Newton* would have been merely an *infant of days.*

SERMON CXII.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT.—DUTY OF PARENTS.

PROVERBS. XXII. 6.—*Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

IN the preceding discourse, I distributed the duties of parents under three heads:

The Maintenance,
The Education, and
The Settlement, of Children.

The Education of Children I proposed also to consider under the two heads of

Instruction, and
Government.

The first of these general heads, together with the former division of the second, were examined in that discourse. I shall now proceed to make some observations on the remaining subjects proposed for discussion at that time.

The Parental Duty, which, according to the plan mentioned, next demands our attention, is *the Government of Children*. The observations, which I shall make concerning this subject, will respect,

The Nature,
The End, and,
The Importance of this Government; and,
The Manner, in which it is to be administered.

Concerning *the Nature of Parental Government*, *its End*, and *its Importance*, my observations must be very summary.

The Nature of all government is justly defined to be the control of one being over the actions of another. This control in the hands of parents over their children is at once the most absolute, perhaps, and clearly the most gentle and indulgent, dominion, which is exercised by mankind. The parent's will is the only law to the child; yet, being steadily regulated by parental affection, is probably more moderate, equitable, and pleasing to him, than any other human government to any other subject. It resembles the divine government more in its nature, and, when wisely administered, in its efficacy, than any other. Correction, sometimes esteemed the whole of it, is usually the least part: a part, indispensable indeed, and sometimes efficacious, when all others have failed. Beside correction it includes advice, commendation, blame, reproof, rebuke, admonition, expostulation, influence, re-

straint, confinement, rewards, the deprivation of enjoyments, the infliction of disgrace, the denial of favour, and various other things: each possessing peculiar efficacy; and all of them efficacious, not only in themselves, but also by the variety of administration, which they furnish, and the relative power, which they derive merely from the fact of succeeding each other.

The End of parental government is undoubtedly the good of children. The end of all government is the good of the governed. Children are given to parents, not to be a convenience to *them*, but that *they* may become blessings to the children. In this way, and ordinarily in this alone, will the children become blessings to the parents. Every parent should fix in his mind a strong, habitual sense of this end. The good, to be accomplished for the child, should be the object of inquiry in every administration of this nature. The kind, the degree, and the continuance, of the punishment, and the reward, should be all determined by it. In a word, it should absolutely govern all the conduct of the parent towards the child.

The importance of parental government will demand very few remarks; since no man will question it in earnest. Every parent ought to remember, that his child is committed to *him*; that all his interests are put into his hands; and that to train up his family for usefulness, and for heaven, is ordinarily the chief duty, which God requires him to perform; the chief good, which he can ever accomplish. If he neglects this duty; he ought to expect that it will be left undone: for no other person will usually undertake it. If *he* does not accomplish this good; he ought to believe, that it will never be accomplished. On the contrary, the child will be left to himself; to evil companions; to men, whose business it is to corrupt the young; to unbridled lusts; to unrestrained iniquity; to Satan, and to ruin. He ought also to remember, that childhood, is the seed-time for all good; the season, when every useful impression is most happily made; the time, when almost all that, which can be done for the child, is to be done. He should remember, that the encouragement is very great. Experience abundantly proves, that well governed children are almost always well behaved; and that almost all religious persons are of this number. What experience declares, the Scriptures ratify. The text, if not an absolute promise, is yet a glorious encouragement to this parental duty. In the mean time, the peace and pleasantness of his family; the filial piety, amiable conduct, and fair reputation, of his children; furnish a rich hope, that he will in the end assemble around him his little flock, and be able to say with exultation and transport, *Behold, here am I, and the children, whom thou hast given me.*

The Manner in which parental government ought to be administered, demands a more extensive consideration.

The observations which I propose to make concerning it, I shall arrange under the following heads.

1. *The Government of Children should begin with the dawn of their reason.*

I have already applied this observation to *parental Instruction:* it is still more forcibly applicable to *parental government.* The habit of submission can never be effectuated without difficulty, unless commenced at the beginning. The first direction of the infant mind has been often, and justly, compared to the first figure, assumed by a twig; which is ordinarily its figure during every subsequent period of its growth. If children are taught effectually to obey at first; they will easily be induced to obey ever afterwards. Almost all those, who are disobedient, are such as have been neglected in the beginning. The twig was suffered to stiffen, before an attempt was made to bend it into the proper shape. Then it resumed, as soon as the pressure ceased, its former figure. If begun in season, the task of securing filial obedience will usually be easy, and the object effectually gained. If then neglected, it will be attended by a multitude of difficulties, and discouragements; and its efficacy will be doubtful, if not fruitless.

2. *Parental Government should be administered with Constancy.*

The *views* manifested by the parent concerning the conduct of the child, should ever be *the same.* His good conduct should be invariably approved; his bad conduct invariably disapproved. The *measures* of the parent, also, should be, universally, of the same tenour. All proper encouragement should be regularly holden out to obedience, and all rational opposition be steadily made to disobedience.

The *active superintendance* of the child should be *unremitted.* He should feel, that he is ever an object of parental attention; ever secure, when his behaviour merits it, of parental favour; and ever conscious, that his faults will expose him to frowns and censures. This unremitted consciousness of the child can never be produced, but by the unremitted care, and watchfulness, of the parent. The *Roman* maxim, *Obsta principiis, Resist the beginnings of evil;* is in all cases replete with wisdom; but is applicable to no case, perhaps, with such force, as to those of children. All their tendencies should be watched. Every commencement of evil, every tendency towards it, should be observed, and resisted.

The *efforts of parents* in this employment should, also, be *unwearied. Discouragement and Sloth are two prime evils in the conduct of parental Government.* The parent, seeing so many, and so unceasing, exertions necessary for the accomplishment of his purpose, usually feels, either earlier or later, as if it could never be accomplished; and hence, from mere discouragement, at first relaxes, and finally gives over, his endeavours. Frequently, also,

he becomes, after a moderate number of trials, wearied of a duty, which he finds so burdensome; and through mere indolence desists from every strenuous attempt to discharge it. Such parents ought to remember, that they are labouring for the salvation of their children; that this mighty object is pre-eminently committed to *them*; and that these reasons for their negligence will be unhappily alleged at the final day.

I have elsewhere compared the mind of a child to a rude mass of silver, in the hand of the silversmith. A single stroke of the hammer, a hundred, or even a thousand, change its form in a very imperfect degree; and advance it but little towards the figure, and beauty, of the vessel which is intended. Were he to stop, nothing valuable would be accomplished. A patient continuance of these seemingly inefficacious efforts, however, will, in the end, produce the proposed vessel in its proper form, and with the highest elegance and perfection. With the same patience and perseverance should parental exertions be made, when employed in forming the minds of children. Thus made, they will usually find a similar issue.

3. *The government of children should be uniformly Kind.*

Parents not unfrequently administer discipline to their children, because they feel themselves obliged to it by conscience; or to gratify anger; or to retaliate some offence; or to compel their children to accomplish some pleasure of their own. Whenever they act under the proper influence of conscience, they are certainly so far to be commended. But whenever they intend merely to unburden their consciences, and feel, that this is done by merely punishing their children, whether the punishment be wise, just, and useful, or not; either their consciences must be very ill informed, or *they* must be very little inclined to satisfy their demands. In the other three cases the discipline is merely selfish; and partakes as little of the true nature of family government, as that of a den of thieves. There are parents, who frankly, but foolishly, declare, that they cannot correct their children, unless when they are in a Passion. Such parents I should advise never to correct them at all. Children, even at an early age, easily understand the nature of such government, and indeed almost always discern more perfectly the nature of our improper conduct, than we either wish or suspect. He, who thinks his child incapable of understanding his open infirmities, will almost of course be deceived. The government of *Passion*, children will always perceive to be causeless, variable, weak, and sinful. The parent, who administers it, will be dreaded by them, indeed; but he will only be dreaded in the same manner, as a wild beast. He will neither be reverenced, nor loved. His commands, so far as they cannot be avoided without danger, will be followed by obedience: so far as they can, they will be neglected. The obedience will be a mere eye-service, and never spring from the heart. When the parent is absent,

therefore, the child will pursue his own inclinations; and will generally counteract his parent's pleasure, whenever his own safety will permit. Such a government prompts the wickedness of children ten times, where it restrains it once.

The government of *Retaliation* is the government of revenge; and, therefore, not the government of a parent, but that of an enemy. In this manner it will be regularly regarded by the child. Accordingly, he will, as far as possible, prevent its effects by concealing his faults in every way, which his ingenuity, or circumstances, can suggest. In pursuit of this object, he will practise every trick, and fetch, and fraud, which his cunning can devise; and ultimately utter every equivocation, and every direct falsehood, which the necessity of extricating himself may require. Nor will it be long, before he will consider his parent as one party, and himself as the other. He will then begin to retaliate in turn. In this manner, a controversy will be instituted, in which it will be the business of each to provoke, and injure, the other. The child will not, indeed, be able to meet his antagonist in the open field; but he will endeavour to supply this defect by watching every opportunity to do mischief secretly, and by making up in cunning what he wants in power. A species of *Indian* hostilities will thus be carried on by him; and frequently for such a length of time, as to embitter the peace of the parent, and to ruin the character of the child.

The government, *which is employed merely in making a child subservient to the Caprice, and Convenience, of a parent*, is too obviously selfish, and sordid, ever to be misunderstood: and it needs only to be understood, to be detested. From parents, certainly, if from any human beings, we look for disinterestedness; especially in the management of their children. But there are parents, who regard their children, as hard masters regard their slaves, and value them, only as they hope to derive profit from their labour, or convenience from their subserviency to their selfish wishes. No words are necessary to show, that such views, feelings, and conduct, are contradictions to the parental character, and duties, alike. Equally hostile are they to the good of the child; and are calculated, only to destroy all his tendencies towards becoming a useful man. Persons, who act in either of these modes, have never set before their eyes the true End of parental government; and have no conceptions of the real nature of that great duty, to which they have been called by their Maker. A little attention to this subject would convince them, that all their government is to be administered under the controlling influence of kindness only; kindness, directed solely to the good of their children. They are, indeed, to reprove, and to punish, them: but this is to be done only for their good; and never to gratify the resentment, nor to promote the selfish purposes, of the parent. It is to be done, because their faults are to be repressed, and because these

are the proper means of repressing them; because it is necessary, that the children should be sober, discreet, virtuous, and useful; and because these are the proper means of preparing them to become so. As such means, only, is all discipline to be used. In every other view the nature of discipline is subverted. Reproof becomes reproach, advice contumely, and correction an assault. Instead of rendering the child what he ought to be, the parent will, in this way, destroy all the worth, which he at present possesses; and prevent that, which he might acquire.

Among the modes of exhibiting kindness in governing our children, *Calmness and Moderation in reproving, and correcting*, are indispensable. He, to whom this office falls, ought, more than in almost any other case, to be in perfect possession of himself. Every thing, which he does, or says, ought to prove, that he is so. His countenance ought then to be mild; his accent gentle; his words free from all unkindness; and his conduct such, as to prove, that he is compelled to this unwelcome office by duty only.

With this spirit, parents will naturally be led *not to govern their children too much*. Like certain *Mohammedans*, who estimate the degree of their devotion by the number of prayers, which they utter, some persons suppose their duty of governing their children to be performed meritoriously, merely because they reprove and punish their children very often; and accordingly make it their business to find fault with them from morning to night, and to punish them from week to week. In this way, both reproof and punishment lose all their power; and only serve to case-harden the child against his duty. Children are as easily injured by too much government, as by too little. Children ought always to be watched with attention and tenderness, but not to be harassed.

Another important office of kindness is *to administer reproof, and punishment, Privately*. Children sometimes commit their faults before others, when the parent is present; and necessity may then demand, that they should be reproved on the spot, and in the presence of those, who witness the fault. Whenever this is not the case, it will, in almost every instance, be desirable to administer the proper discipline in private. In this case the child will feel, that his character is saved; and will be solicitous, in future, to preserve his own character by good conduct. He will feel also, that he is treated kindly; and will be grateful for the kindness. His mind will be left free for the undivided exercise of veneration for his parent. The parent at the same time, will enjoy the best possible opportunity for reproving him freely, largely, pungently, and solemnly; without that embarrassment, which will necessarily arise from the presence of others. In the presence of others, the child will feel his pride wounded, his character sacrificed, and himself disgraced; and all this without any visible necessity. He will, therefore, be angry, stubborn, pert, and not improbably disposed to repeat his former faults, and to perpetrate others. These

emotions and these designs, he will, not unnaturally, disclose to his companions; and they, not less unnaturally, will enhance and encourage them. Thus the whole force of the parental administration will always be weakened, and most frequently destroyed.

4. *The Government of Children should always be accompanied by Proofs of its reasonableness and Equity.*

Many parents err through *too much* indulgence; and many through *too little*. Both extremes are unhappy, as well as unreasonable. Every child ought clearly to see, that his parent's censures are not unkind; and that his indulgence is not foolish. To this end, he ought regularly, and as soon as his capacity will admit, to be taught the reasons, on which the conduct of his parent, from time to time, is founded: not as a piece of respect to him, which he may demand; but as wisely-directed information, which will be eminently useful to both parent and child. To the parent it will be useful, by establishing his character in the eyes of his child, as a ruler whose measures are all originated, and directed, by solid reasons and sound wisdom, steady equity and unfailing kindness: as a ruler, whose government is to be reverenced, whose commands are to be obeyed, and whose wishes are to be accorded with, from their reasonableness, as well as their authority; from the benefit, as well as the duty, of obeying; and from the pleasure, universally experienced in conforming to the will of such a ruler. In this case the parent is secured of the obedience of the child, when he is absent, (as for the greater part of the time he must necessarily be,) no less than when he is present; and is assured also, that his obedience will be voluntary, and exact, and on both these accounts, delightful. To the child this information will be highly advantageous, because it will early accustom him to obey from the reasonableness of obedience; and will insensibly lead him to examine, feel, and submit to, predominating reasons; not only in cases of filial duty, but in all others. Thus he will habitually grow up to a general accordance with the dictates of reason, and the representations of conscience; will sustain a far more elevated and desirable character, than a child governed by mere authority; and, when absent abroad, or arrived at the years of self-direction, will be incomparably more safe. The family, in this case, will exhibit the delightful spectacle of rational beings, governed by rational beings; and not the humiliating one of slaves, struggling under the domination of a master.

5. *The government of children should be Self-consistent.*

Every parent ought to possess himself of *a scheme* of governing his children, before he commences the practice. In this scheme the same things should be uniformly aimed at; the same things required; and the same things prohibited. The character of the parent, also, as displayed in the execution of this scheme, should invariably be the same; and that should be the character, formed of reason and principle only. In all the parent's measures

the child should see, uniformly and irresistibly, that the parent hates vice above all things, and above all things loves virtue. This hatred to vice, and love to virtue, ought to appear to be inwrought in the very constitution of the parent's mind; to be inseparable from his habitual views and feelings; and to be the first, the unvarying, and, as far as may be, the only, movements of his soul, with respect to these great subjects. Of course, all his conduct ought to present the unquestionable proof which practice and example furnish, that this is his real character.

In consequence of this consistency, children will uniformly expect the same parental opposition to their faults, and the same countenance to their virtuous conduct. Few motives will operate more powerfully, than such expectations, either to persuade them to virtue, or to restrain them from sin. Fewer crimes will, therefore, be committed by them; and of course the parent will have fewer transgressions to reprove, or punish. In this manner, a great part of the parent's labour will be prevented; and not a small part of his pain. What remains to be done will be incomparably more pleasant. His encouragement to proceed will, also, be unspeakably greater. To see the efficacy of our endeavours is the most animating of all earthly inducements to continue them.

Besides, children will, in this case, regard their parents with far more veneration than any other. Consistency of character is essential to all dignity. A changing man, even when not a faulty one, is almost necessarily regarded as a trifler. A man, on the contrary, exhibiting uniform views, and principles, in a life, uniformly directed by them, governed, and governing, by the same rules, and an unchanging regard to them, is always possessed of dignity; and, when seen to be steadily opposed to sin and folly, and attached to wisdom and virtue, is possessed of high dignity. This character, seen in a parent, will invariably engage the highest filial veneration.

When children become satisfied, that the restraints and corrections, which they experience from their parents, spring only from a conviction, that they are right, and necessary; their consciences will almost always acquiesce. What is remarkable, and would, were it not common, be surprising; they love the parent, who administers them, much more, than him who neglects them. Between parental government, conducted in this manner, and that which is passionate, desultory, and fraught with inconsistencies, the difference can scarcely be calculated.

At a general conclusion of my observations concerning the education of Children, I add that *all the efforts of the parent ought to be accompanied with Prayer to God for his blessing*. It is the indispensable duty of mankind to *pray always with all prayer*. Few, very few, are those employments in human life, which so loudly call for the faithful performance of this duty, as that, which has

been under discussion. Wisdom, patience, faithfulness, kindness, and constancy, are rarely demanded of man in any concern, either so unceasingly, or in so great a degree, as in this. All these qualifications are indispensable to our success; and we need them indispensably from *the Father of lights* who alone can furnish these and all other *good gifts*. If we possessed them all; we should equally need his blessings to give an efficacious and happy issue to our exertions. Both the qualifications, and the blessings, then, are to be asked *of God who giveth liberally unto all;* and who hath assured us, that *every one who asketh shall receive*. The parent, who educates his children with the greatest care, and yet fails to invoke the blessing of God upon his labours, has done but half his duty; and is entitled to no promise of success.

III. *I shall now make a few observations concerning the Settlement of Children.*

The parent's duty with respect to this subject will be principally concerned with the following things.

1. *The choice of that Business, in which he is to spend, principally, his life.*

In selecting this object, a parent is bound to regard the state of his own circumstances; the reasonable expectations of his child; his talents; his inclinations; the probability of his obtaining a competent subsistence; the prospect of his usefulness; and the security of his virtue. It will be easily seen, that all these are discretionary things; to be judged of as well as we are able, and reducible to no precise general rule. Where children are not peculiarly froward, and parents not peculiarly prejudiced, the advantage of the child will, in ordinary cases, be sufficiently consulted. The principal difficulty, here, will usually be, to determine how far regard is to be had to his inclinations. A degree of indulgence is always to be given them. When they direct to a prudent and profitable employment, there can be no controversy; nor when they direct to a dangerous one. All the real perplexity will spring from cases of a doubtful nature. Here the child's inclinations are supposed to lean one way, and the judgment of the parent another. If the parent apprehends the bias of the child to be invincible; it will be both prudent, and right, to yield his own inclinations: If not; he may lawfully require the child to make an experiment of the business, which *he* has preferred. The child is then bound to submit quietly to the choice of the parent; and to endeavour faithfully to subdue his own opposing inclinations. If, after a fair trial, he finds them unconquerable; the parent is, in my view, bound to yield the contested point. The happiness of the child ought, here, to be the commanding object; and no child can be happy, who is prevented from following the business which he loves, and compelled to pursue that which he hates.

Universally, the parent's duty demands of him to place his child, so far as the case will permit, in that employment, which up

on the whole is best; which will probably be most productive of his comfort, reputation, usefulness, and piety. To some children, on account of their peculiar dispositions, certain employments are sufficiently safe, which for others are to be regarded as eminently dangerous. The business, in which children are to be placed, when they are exposed by their dispositions to peculiar temptations, should, as far as may be, always be such, as to counteract their dispositions. The employments, which awaken a moderate ambition, and a moderate desire of wealth and pleasure, and which yet disappoint no reasonable expectations of children, are usually preferable to all others. Those of a contrary nature, and those, particularly, which are expected to produce sudden opulence, and speedy aggrandizement, or which conduct to voluptuousness, are fraught with infinite danger and mischief. *They that will be rich*, or great, or voluptuous, *fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, that drown men in destruction and perdition. The love of* these things *is the root of all evil: and those, who covet after them, pierce themselves through with many sorrows.* Most parents wish these things for their children; but they *know not what spirit* they *are of.* Most parents, also, wish their sons to be geniuses, and their daughters to be beauties. How unfounded, how self-deceiving, are all these desires! I do not deny, that many men of high office, and of great wealth, men who have possessed in abundance all those, which are called the enjoyments of life, have been pious; and, so far as this world permits, happy. I do not deny that such has been the character, and state, of many men, remarkable for their talents; and of many women, distinguished for their beauty. I do not deny, that all these things are, in their nature, to be regarded as blessings; or that they sometimes are actually blessings. But to most of mankind they are plainly curses; and probably to all who ardently desire them. What a melancholy history would the whole history be of beauties, geniuses, and men in high office, of great wealth, and determined sensuality!

2. *Marriage.*

With respect to this subject, children are usually governed by inclination only, or chiefly: their parents sometimes by judgments; sometimes by avarice; sometimes by ambition; sometimes by hatred to the family, or person, with whom the child is intended to be connected; and sometimes by favouritism for other persons, or families. The parent ought to be influenced by his unbiassed judgment only. By every thing else he will, without suspecting it, be deceived; and sometimes in a degree which can neither be foreseen, nor limited, render both himself, and his child, unhappy through life.

Parents can never lawfully compel their children to marry persons, who are objects of their dislike; nor use at all for such a purpose that influence, or those persuasives, which operate upon

tender and susceptible minds as the worst kind of compulsion. The reasons are plain. The child would be made miserable; and could not, in any event, without a prevarication, of the same nature with perjury, take upon himself the marriage vows. But, during the minority of his children, he may be required by indispensable duty to restrain them from marrying, in certain cases. This, however, is an extreme exercise of authority; and should take place, only where the cases are extreme; cases, for example, in which the intended partner is an infidel; or grossly vicious; or of a family, scandalous for vice; or in some other case of a similar importance. In all inferior cases, the parent's duty is, in my view, confined to information; to persuasion, kindly and reasonably conducted; and to such delays of the intended connexion as will furnish opportunity to give these dissuasives their full operation. In these cases, children are bound to listen with the utmost willingness, and impartiality, to the parent's reasons; and deeply to feel, and to respect his pleasure. If the reasons are solid; they ought to be influenced by their whole force; and, as far as may be, to overcome their own inclinations: remembering, that, although their own happiness is the *first* thing to be regarded in forming such a connexion, that of their parents is the *second*; and that parental opposition to their wishes can rarely aim at any thing but their own good. When children have used all reasonable expedients to bend their inclinations to the wishes of their parents, and are yet unable to subdue them, their non-compliance can lawfully neither be punished, nor resented.

3. *Assistance towards acquiring a competent living.*

When children commence their settlement in life, they often need assistance, at least as much as in earlier periods. This assistance is, however, principally confined to two articles; giving advice, and furnishing pecuniary aid. All parents, perhaps, are sufficiently willing to give advice; and most, I believe, are willing to befriend their children with pecuniary assistance, in such a degree, as is not felt to be inconvenient to themselves. There are those, however, who impart sparingly enough; and there are others, still, who are disposed to give little or nothing. Avarice sometimes influences the parent's conduct in this respect; and oftener, I believe, a reluctance to lessen the heap, which we have been long gathering; and oftener, still, the wound, which pride feels at being thought to possess less wealth, than the utmost of what we have amassed. These are always wretched reasons; and, in this case, reasons for wretched conduct. A child, when setting out in the world, finds himself surrounded by a multitude of difficulties; to struggle with which he must be very imperfectly prepared. Unexperienced, alone, suddenly plunged into many perplexities, and unacquainted with the means of relieving themselves, children are often distressed, discouraged, and sometimes broken down; when the helping hand of a parent would, with no real inconven-

ience to himself, raise them to hope, resolution, and comfort. That parents, so situated, are bound by plain duty to assist their children in these circumstances can need no proof. He, who will not thus relieve the offspring of his own bowels, even at the expense of being thought less rich, or of being actually less rich, deserves not the name of a parent; and ought to be ashamed to show his face among those who do. For my own part, I cannot conceive, that a man, who will not deny himself a little, to befriend his own children, can have ever compassed the self-denial of forgiving his enemies; nor understand how he can possess sufficient confidence to stand up in morning and evening worship, at the head of his family, and say, in his own name and theirs, *Our Father, who art in heaven.*

SERMON CXIII.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT.—DUTY OF RULERS.

Exodus xx. 12.—*Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

BESIDE the direct import of this precept, it has been generally, and justly, considered as by a very obvious analogy including those duties, which are reciprocally to be rendered by men in various other relations: particularly those of superiors and inferiors, whatever may be the basis of their relative characters. To an examination of all these duties it might fairly lead. I shall, however, make it my guide to the investigation of one class of them only: viz. *The Duties of Magistrates and Subjects.*

The relations of Magistrate and Subject are so obviously analogous to those of parents and children, that Magistrates have been often styled *the fathers of their people;* and their people often called *their children.* No language of commendation is with more frequency, or with more emphasis, applied to a prince, distinguished for his wisdom, justice, and benevolence, than that *he was a father to his subjects.* In this manner mankind have acknowledged the similarity of these relations; and from a similarity of relations, every man knows, must arise a similarity of duties. Accordingly, the duty to magistrates is enjoined in the very same terms, as that which is owed to parents.

Fear God, says *St. Peter; honour the king.* We are also directed by *St. Paul* to render *reverence, honour, custom,* and *tribute* to the several orders of magistracy, as from time to time they are due.

It is my design in this discourse to state, in a summary manner, *the Nature of civil government;* and *the respective duties of Rulers and Subjects.* This I shall do without even a remote reference either to the past, or present, state of our own government. I never preached what is commonly called a political sermon, on the Sabbath, in my life: and I shall not begin now; although to preach such sermons is unquestionably the right, and in certain cases as unquestionably the duty, of every Minister of the Gospel. All, that I shall attempt to perform, is to exhibit some of the primary principles, and duties, which pertain to government, as a branch of moral science. The knowledge of these is in some degree ne-

cessary to every man, who wishes to discharge either the duties of a ruler, or those of a subject.

The foundation of all government is, undoubtedly, the Will of God. Government, since the days of *Mr. Locke*, has been extensively supposed *to be founded in the Social Compact.* No opinion is more groundless than this. The great man, whom I have mentioned, was probably led to adopt it, from his zeal to oppose the ridiculous whims of *Sir Robert Filmer;* who taught, that *kings had a divine, hereditary right to their thrones, by virtue of the original gift of universal dominion to Adam.* In opposing this monstrous absurdity, *Mr. Locke* fell into another not a whit more rational, or defensible. This doctrine supposes, that mankind were originally without any government; and that in an absolute state of nature they voluntarily came together, for the purpose of constituting a body politic, creating rulers, prescribing their functions, and making laws directing their own civil duties. It supposes, that they entered into grave and philosophic deliberations; individually consented to be bound by the will of the majority; and cheerfully gave up the wild life of savage liberty, for restraints, which, however necessary and useful, no savage could ever brook, even for a day. Antecedently to such an assembly, and its decisions, this doctrine supposes, that men have no civil rights, obligations, or duties, and of course, that those, who do not consent to be bound by such a compact, are, now, not the subjects of either: such a compact, in the apprehension of the abettors of this doctrine, being that, which creates all the civil rights, obligations, and duties, of man.

The absurdities of this doctrine are endless. He, who knows any thing of the nature of savages, knows perfectly, that *no savage was ever capable of forming such a design;* and that civilized life is indispensably necessary to the very perception of the things, pre-supposed by this doctrine, and absolutely pre-requisite to the very existence of such an assembly. Every one, acquainted at all with savages, knows equally well, that, if they were capable of all this comprehension, *nothing, short of omnipotence, could persuade them to embrace such a scheme of conduct.* There is nothing, which a savage hates more, than the restraints of civilized life; nothing, which he despises more, than the civilized character, its refinements, its improvements, nay, its very enjoyments. To have formed such an assembly, or even to have proposed such a system, men must have already been long governed, and civilized.

At the same time, there is no fact, more clearly evinced by the history of man, than that *such a compact never existed.* This even the abettors of it are obliged to confess; and this cuts up the doctrine by the roots. For if the social compact was not a fact; it is nothing.

But it is alleged, that, *although this compact was never an express one, it may, still, be fairly considered as a tacit and implied compact.* To the very existence of a compact it is indispensable, that the contracting party should be conscious, that the subject of the compact is proposed to him for his deliberation, choice, and consent; and that he does actually deliberate, choose, and consent. But there is not even the shadow of a pretence, that any man, considering himself as being in a state of nature, and subject to no civil government, was ever conscious of being invited to become a party to such a compact, and of having this question ever proposed to him for such deliberation, or such consent. *There is, therefore, as little foundation for the supposition of a tacit, as for that of an express, social compact.*

It is further alleged, that *this scheme, although confessedly imaginary, may yet be advantageously employed to illustrate the nature of civil government.* In answer to this allegation, I shall only observe, that the philosopher who believes falsehood to be necessary, or useful, to the illustration of truth, must be very hardly driven by his own weakness, or by the erroneousness of his system.

If it were indeed true, that government is thus founded, then these fatal consequences would follow.

Every despotism on earth must stand as long as the world continues. Every subject of despotic power is by this doctrine supposed to promise his obedience to it; and no man can ever withdraw himself from the obligation of his own promise. A new government can never upon this scheme be substituted for a former, but by the choice of the majority of those, who are subject to it: and as men come into the world, there never can be, in any country, a majority of inhabitants, who have not already promised obedience to the existing government. A minority, therefore, must always comprise the whole number of those, who can lawfully act in the business of modelling the government anew. Nor could even these act in concert, without being guilty of rebellion. Nor could those, who had already promised obedience, be released from their promise. If, therefore, a new government were to be constituted; there must be two sets of inhabitants, every where intermingled throughout such a country, and obeying two distinct and hostile governments.

If any man, in any country, declines his consent to the compact; he is under no obligation to obey the existing government. Personal consent, according to this scheme, is all, that constitutes such obligation. Such a man may, therefore, fix himself in a state of nature. If he attacks others, indeed; they may attack him in turn: but the government cannot lawfully meddle with him, nor with his concerns.

If the ruler should violate any, even the least part of his own engagements; then the subjects are released from their engagements:

and of course, from all obligation to obey the laws. In other words, from the least violation of the ruler's engagements, a state of anarchy lawfully and necessarily ensues. If the subjects pass by such violation in silence; their consent to it is equally implied with their supposed original compact. Of course the ruler may lawfully commit the same violation again as often as he pleases; nor can the subjects lawfully complain; because they have consented to it in the same manner as to the pre-existing government. Every such violation, therefore, which is not openly resisted, is finally sanctioned.

On the other hand, *if a subject violate any of his engagements, however small; the ruler may lawfully make him an Outlaw; and deprive him of every privilege, which he holds as a citizen.*

A foreigner, passing through such a country, can be under no obligation to obey its laws; and, if he does any thing, which may be construed as an outrage; must either be suffered to do it with impunity, or must be attacked by private violence. Such attacks, a few times repeated, would convert any people into a horde of robbers.

No man could, in such a government, be punished with death; however enormous might be his crimes; because no man ever thought of making, or has any right to make, a surrender of his own life into the hands of others.

All these, and a multitude of other, deplorable consequences follow, irresistibly follow, from the doctrine, that government is founded on the social compact.

Government, as I have already remarked, *is founded in the Will of God.* The evidence of this position is complete. That God made mankind in order to make them happy, if they themselves will consent to be so, cannot be questioned. As little can it be questioned, that government is indispensable to their happiness, and to all the human means of it; to the safety of life, liberty, and property; to peace; to order; to useful knowledge; to morals; and to religion. Nay, it is necessary to the very existence of any considerable numbers of mankind. A country without government would speedily, for want of those means of subsistence and comfort, to the existence of which it is indispensable, become an *Arabian* desert; and that, however fruitful its soil, or salubrious its climate. Mankind have never yet been able to exist for any length of time in a state of anarchy. What reason so completely evinces, the Scriptures decide in the most peremptory manner. *The powers that be*, says *St. Paul, are ordained of God:* in other words; *Government is an ordinance of God.*

It is not here to be intended, *that God has ordained a given form of government.* This he has never done, except in a single instance. He gave the *Israelites* a system, substantially of the republican form. This fact may, perhaps, afford a presumption in favour of such a form, wherever it is capable of existing, but can do nothing more. Nothing more is here intended, than *that God*

has willed the existence of Government itself. He has undoubtedly left it to nations to institute such modes of it, whenever this is in their power, as should best suit their own state of society.

As God willed the existence of government for the happiness of mankind; it is unanswerably certain, that every government is agreeable to his will just so far, as it promotes that happiness; that that government, which promotes it most, is most agreeable to his will; and that that government, which opposes human happiness, is equally opposed to his will. From these undeniable principles both rulers and subjects may easily learn most of their own duty. Whatever is conformed to them is right: whatever is contrary to them is wrong of course. This, it will be remembered, is the dictate both of common sense, and of the Scriptures.

Every ruler is accordingly bound to remember, that he is raised to the chair of magistracy, solely for the good of those whom he governs. His own good he is to find in the consciousness of having promoted that of others; and in the support, affection, and respect, which they render, and are bound to render, him for discharging this important duty. There is no greater mistake, there is no more anti-scriptural, or contemptible, absurdity, than the doctrine *of millions made for one;* of a ruler, raised to the chair of magistracy, to govern for himself; to receive homage; to roll in splendour; to riot in luxury; to gratify pride, power, and ambition, at the expense of the toils and sufferings of his fellow-men. Such a ruler is only a public robber. Every man in office, however elevated, is bound to remember, as a being equally accountable to God with his fellow-men, that his personal rights are by the divine constitution and pleasure the same, as those of others; that his personal gratification is of no more importance, and can claim no greater sacrifices, than that of others; that peculation, fraud, falsehood, injustice, oppression, drunkenness, gluttony, lewdness, sloth, profaneness, irreligion, and impiety; in a word, every crime; is accompanied by greater guilt in him, than in men at large; because of his superior advantages to know; and his superior inducements to perform, his duty. Forsaking all private gratifications, then, so far as they are inconsistent with the public happiness, just so much more important than his, as those who enjoy it are more numerous, he is required, indispensably, to see, that his government has that happy and glorious influence upon his people, which is described by a man, thoroughly versed in this subject, in the following beautiful language: *The Spirit of the Lord spake by me; and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass, springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.* **2 Sam. xxiii. 2—4**

To possess this beneficent influence; like this glorious luminary to diffuse light, and warmth, and animation, and happiness, to all around him; a Ruler ought,

1. *To be a man of absolute Sincerity.*

Or the ruler of the Universe it is said, that *it is impossible, that he should lie. Mercy and truth*, said the wisest ruler that ever lived in this world, *preserve the king. The lip of truth*, says the same prince, *shall be established for ever.* "If truth," said King *John* of *France*, "were to be banished from the world; it ought still to find a residence in the breast of Princes." On the importance of truth I shall have occasion to dwell hereafter. It ought, however, to be observed here, that truth is the basis, on which rest all the natural and moral interests of Intelligent beings; that neither virtue nor happiness can exist without it; and that falsehood, generally diffused, would ruin not only a kingdom or a world, but the universe; would change all rational beings into fiends, and convert heaven itself into a hell.

There are two kinds of government; that of force; and that of persuasion. A government of persuasion is the only moral, or free government. A government of force may preserve order in every case, which that force can reach; but the order is that of a churchyard; the stillness and quiet of death. The inhabitants of a kingdom, governed in this manner, are tenants of the grave: moving masses, indeed, of flesh and bones: but the animating principle is gone. The soul is shrivelled, and fled; and nothing remains, but dust and putrefaction.

A government of persuasion subsists only in the mutual confidence of the ruler and the subjects. But where truth is not, confidence is not. A deceitful ruler is never believed for a moment. If we could suppose him desirous to do good; he would want the power: for none would trust either his declarations, or his promises. The only feelings, excited in the minds of the community, towards him and his measures, would be jealousy and hatred. Even fools know, that upright and benevolent measures not only need no support from falsehood, but are ruined by it. The very connection of falsehood, therefore, with any measures, proves irresistibly to all men, that the measures themselves are mischievous, and that the Author of them is a villain. Where confidence does not exist, voluntary obedience cannot exist. A lying ruler, if his government is to continue, makes force, or despotism, indispensable to his administration. So sensible are even the most villainous magistrates of these truths, that they leave no measure untried to persuade their subjects, that themselves are men of veracity. Nay, all sagacious despots carefully fulfil their promises to such of their subjects, as they think necessary to the support of their domination, and to the success of their measures. Falsehood may, indeed, in the hands of a man of superior cunning, succeed for a time; but it

can never last long: and, whenever detection arrives, it draws after it a terrible train of avengers.

Besides, lying is the most contemptible of all sins. *Ye are of your father, the devil*, said our Saviour to the *Jews; for he was a liar from the beginning, and the father of it.* This contemptible resemblance to the vilest and most contemptible of all beings, the source of complete debasement to every one who is the subject of it, is pre-eminently contemptible in a ruler. He is, of course, the object both of public and private scorn. No degradation is more indignantly regarded, than that of being governed by a liar.

If a ruler hearken to lies; says *Solomon, all his servants are wicked.* Such a magistrate will be served by none but profligate men. The evils of his government will, therefore, spread, by means of his subordinate officers, into every nook and corner of the land. Like the Simoon of *Nubia*, he spreads poison, death, and desolation, over the wretched countries subjected to his sway.

2. *A Ruler is bound to be a Just man.*

He that ruleth over men, saith God, *must be just.* This, indeed, is united, of course, with the preceding character. *He that speaketh truth*, saith *Solomon, sheweth forth righteousness.* The importance of justice in government is, like that of truth, inestimable; and, as it respects the divine government, is exhibited with wonderful force in that declaration of *Moses, He is the Rock;* that is, the immoveable foundation, on which the universe rests. Why? The answer is, *His work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment*, or justice; *a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is He.* On the truth and justice of the infinite Mind the universe is built, as a house upon a rock. "*Fiat justitia; ruat coelum;*" is an adage, proverbially expressing the judgment of Common sense, concerning this subject. *Let Justice be done, although heaven itself should tumble into ruin.*

This comprehensive attribute demands in the

First place, Of the Legislator, that he enact just laws.

Laws are the rules, by which rulers themselves, as well as the people at large, are, or ought to be governed. If these are unjust; the whole system of administration will be a system of iniquity; and the mass of guilt, thus accumulated, will rest primarily on the head of the Legislator.

Secondly; Of the Judge, that all his Interpretations of law, and all his Decisions, founded on it, be just. Wo unto them, saith *Isaiah, who justify the wicked for a reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him. Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment;* saith God to *Israel, thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour. It is not good*, says *Solomon, to have respect of persons in judgment. He that saith unto the wicked*, that is, in a judicial sentence, *Thou art righteous; him shall people curse: nations shall abhor him. But to*

them that rebuke him shall be delight; and a good blessing shall come upon them. Tribunals of justice bring laws to every man's fireside; and apply them directly to his property, liberty, person, and life. How just soever, how reasonable soever, laws may be; an iniquitous tribunal may prevent all their good effects; and render a country as miserable by its decisions, as it could be by the operations of original tyranny in the legislator. When God established the government of *Israel*, he himself formed the constitution, and enacted the laws. All the political evils, which that people suffered, therefore, were effectuated by the unjust applications of those laws. They were, however, oppressed, at times, as intensely, as the nations, who have been under despotic dominion. The guilt, and the mischiefs, of this oppression, are in the Scriptures charged wholly, and truly, to the judicial and executive magistracy. The same evils, in the same degree, may be derived to any people from the same sources. A wise and upright judiciary is a public blessing, which no language can adequately exhibit; which no people can too highly prize, and too strenuously vindicate; and without which no people can be safe, or happy.

Thirdly; Of the Executive magistrate, that he execu'e the laws faithfully, invariably, and exactly. This is so plain a truth, and so universally acknowledged, as to need no illustration. The end of all legislative and judicial efforts is found here; and, if this great duty is unaccomplished, both legislative and judicial efforts, however wise, and just, and good, they may be, are a mere puppet-show.

3. *A Ruler must be a Benevolent man.*

Of the Universal Ruler it is said, *God is love.* Of the same character ought all his earthly delegates to be possessed.

Under the influence of this spirit, infinitely important to the happiness of intelligent beings, *Rulers are bound to make the public good their sole object in governing.* Their own personal interests, compared with the general interest, are an unit to many millions; and are immensely better promoted by securing the common good, than by any possible pursuit of that, which is private and selfish. If they think otherwise; it is either because they cannot, or will not discern the truth.

Under the influence of this spirit also, *he is bound to administer justice with mercy.* In the conduct of such beings, as men, there are very many cases, in which a rule, generally just, becomes unjust by a rigid application. For these cases wise governments have endeavoured to provide by entrusting the proper magistrate with a discretionary authority; in the exercise of which, clemency may be extended wherever it may be extended with propriety. Even where a strict application of law is right, and necessary, there may be a harshness and unkindness in the manner of application, sometimes scarcely less cruel, than injustice in the applica-

tion itself. A benevolent ruler will never administer government in this manner.

Universally, *a benevolent Ruler will prevent, redress, relieve,* and *remove,* the wrongs both of the public and of individuals, as far, and as soon, as it shall be in his power. He will cast an affectionate eye on all the concerns of his countrymen; and, wherever he sees calamities arise, will kindly interpose with those means of relief, which God has placed in his hands. The extensive power of doing good, with which he is entrusted by his Creator, he will consider as thus entrusted, only that he may do good; and will feel himself delightfully rewarded by having been selected as the honourable instrument for accomplishing so glorious a purpose. That all this is demanded by his duty, it is unnecessary even to assert.

4. *A Ruler is bound to respect the Laws of his Country.*

By this I intend, particularly, that he is bound to conform to them in all his conduct, personal and public. The laws of every free country prescribe alike the conduct of the ruler and the ruled. The *official conduct* of all magistrates, whatever be their office, is directed by particular laws. To every one of these, so far as his own duties are marked out by it, each magistrate is bound to conform with absolute exactness: not generally and loosely only, but with respect to every *jot and tittle.* The *personal conduct* of the ruler is prescribed by the same laws, which direct that of his fellow-citizens. These laws, also, it is his duty faithfully and scrupulously to obey: a duty enforced by higher obligations, than those, which respect men in general; because he is fairly supposed to understand more perfectly the duty and importance of obeying; and because in violating law, his evil example will weaken the government, and prompt others to the same violation, more than that of any private individual. The ruler, who violates the laws of the land, and yet attempts to compel, or persuade, others to obey them, labours, with the *Danaides,* to fill with water a tub full of holes.

Concerning the king, whom God foresaw the Israelites would one day elect to govern them, *Moses,* by his direction, says to Israel, *It shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests, the Levites; and it shall be with him; and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren; and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left.* Deut. xvii. 19, 20.

5. *A Ruler ought to be a man of Piety.*

That a ruler is bound to sustain this character by all the obligations, which are incumbent on other men, will not be questioned. I intend something more. A ruler is under peculiar obligations to

sustain this character, beside those, which are common to other men. As a private citizen, he was under all the common obligations to sustain this character. As a ruler, he is under new ones. His duties are become more important, and arduous; and demand, in an eminent degree, the blessing of God to enable him to perform them aright. He has greater means of doing good put into his hands, and needs, in a peculiar degree, the divine assistance, to enable him to use them. If he should be left to unwise, or wicked measures; they will be far more mischievous to his countrymen, than any thing, which he could formerly have done, when he was a private citizen. His personal conduct, also, cannot fail to be much more beneficial, or much more noxious, to his country, than if he had not been invested with a public character.

In accordance with these observations, the Scriptures inform us, that the rulers of *Israel* and *Judah* were eminent blessings, or eminent curses, to the people, over which they presided. *Lucia*, *Jehoshaphat*, *Hezekiah*, and *Josiah*, are remarkable examples of the glorious influence, which a ruler may possess, towards reforming a nation, and rendering it happy. *Jeroboam* and *Ahab* are terrible proofs of the power, which a ruler may exert, to change a nation into a horde of profligates. What magistrate, except such as *Ahab* and *Jeroboam*, would not covet the character, and influence, of the *four first* of these princes? What man of common sobriety would not shrink with horror from the thought of resembling the *two last?* But the four first were men of exemplary piety: while the two last were impious beyond example.

At the same time, God usually blesses a nation for the sake of pious rulers: whereas an impious one cannot fail to become a curse. But all blessings are given in answer to prayer. *Ask, and ye shall receive*, is the only promise of good to man; involving the condition, without which, it is never promised. If rulers, then, would obtain blessings either for themselves, or their people; they, like all other men, must pray for them. *But the sacrifice of the wicked*, and of wicked rulers as well as of other wicked men, *is an abomination to the Lord:* while *the prayer of the upright is his delight.* Which of these men ought we here to suppose, that God will answer, and bless?

6. *A Ruler is bound to become a blessing by his Example.*

The character of a good Ruler is forcibly, and perfectly, described by St. Paul, when he styles him *a Minister of God, for good unto his people.* This is his whole business; and, while he pursues it, he is acting in his only proper character. To form this character, every thing which I have mentioned, contributes, as an essential part. But every thing, which has been said, except what was observed concerning his personal obedience to the laws of the land, and his piety, respects his official duties. The observation, now to be illustrated, respects his conduct, as a man.

As a man, he is peculiarly required to be an example of all the Christian virtues. Whatever he does, others will do, because he does it: and many more will imitate him, than if he were a private person. The weight of power, and the splendour of office, give to the example of the ruler, especially in an elevated station, an authority, a persuasiveness, a charm, which fascinates multitudes. If his example be virtuous; it will greatly discountenance, and check, vice; and greatly encourage, diffuse, and strengthen virtue. If vicious; it will become pestilential; and spread contagion, decay, and death, through all around him. No man can be so great a blessing, or so great a curse, in this respect, as a ruler: and the example of every man in high office will invariably be either a public curse, or a public blessing. *Jeroboam* and *Ahab* were incomprehensible curses to the *Israelites*, through every succeeding age of their national existence. What man of common sense, in such an alternative, can balance a moment concerning the choice, which he shall make?

7. *Every ruler, vested with the appointment of subordinate officers, is under indispensable obligations to select men of the very same character, which has been already described.*

Moreover, thou shalt provide, said *Jethro* to *Moses*, *out of all the people, able men; such as fear God; men of truth; hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens; and let them judge the people at all seasons. Judges and officers*, said *Moses* to the *Israelites*, *shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee throughout thy tribes; and they shall judge the people with just judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons; neither take a gift; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. Him*, says *David*, speaking of this very subject, *him, that hath an high look, and a proud heart, I will not suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land; that they may dwell with me; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.* These passages need no comment. The voice of God has here determined this point, in a manner which cannot be misunderstood.

With this decision exactly accords that of Experience and that of Common sense. Subordinate officers are eyes, and ears, and hands, and feet, to their superiors in office. They are the means of furnishing them with the most necessary information; that of the wants, circumstances, dangers, and sufferings, of the nation; that of the real influence of governmental measures, whether beneficial or mischievous; and, generally, all that, on which future regulations ought to be grounded. They are the immediate means of executing every law, and carrying into effect every

measure of administration. Their own conduct, example, and influence, reach every neighbourhood, every fireside. Nations have almost always suffered incomparably more from a multitude of little tyrants, than from a single great one; and have been immensely more corrupted by a host of evil examples, than by a solitary pattern of wickedness, however great and splendid. In vain will the wisest, most upright, and most benevolent ruler, labour to promote public happiness; if he commits the administration of his measures to profligates and villains. It is, however, to be remembered, that a ruler will of course appoint to subordinate offices, men, whose character corresponds with his own. A wise and good ruler, so far as his information extends, will choose none but wise and good men, to aid him in the business of governing. A bad ruler will find none but bad assistants, convenient for his purposes.

8. *A Ruler is under the highest obligations to be industrious.*

Industry is the duty of all men, and pre-eminently that of a ruler. The various, complicated, and arduous business of governing demands the full exertion of all the talents, and the full employment of all the time, allotted to man. Persons in high offices, particularly, are bound to improve their talents by every well-directed effort. They are under indispensable obligations to gain, so far as is in their power, the most enlarged, and exact, information of their official duties, and the best modes of discharging them; of the interests of the people, and country, over which they preside; of the means, by which their rights may be most effectually secured; of the dangers, either at home, or abroad, to which they are exposed, and of the ways, in which those dangers may be averted; of the best means of private safety, and national defence; and, in a word, of all those measures, by which may be insured the safety, peace, good order, and universal happiness, of the nation.

On this information ought to be founded a course of unremitted industry in effectuating, by the most useful measures, all these great and good purposes. A weak and ignorant ruler may deserve pity: a lazy one can only merit abhorrence. Both are, of course, public nuisances. When God was about to punish the Jews in a terrible manner, for their sins, he announced the alarming judgment in this remarkable prediction: *Behold the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem, and from Judah, the stay and the staff; the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; the mighty man, and the man of war; the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient; the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. And I will give children to be their princes; and babes shall rule over them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour. The child shall be-*

have himself proudly against the ancient, and the vase against the honourable. In the view of God, therefore, the loss of wise and able rulers, and the government of weak and foolish ones, such as indolent men in office always are, are both terrible judgments upon a nation, and severe inflictions of the divine vengeance upon guilt of no common die.

SERMON CXIV.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT.—THE DUTY OF SUBJECTS.

EXODUS XX. 12.—*Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

IN the last discourse, I considered at some length, *the Duty of Rulers*. I shall now go on to examine *that of Subjects*. As a free Government is that, with which alone we have any practical concern; my observations will be especially referred to a government of this kind. All Subjects have, indeed, many duties in common; but there are some, which are peculiar to men, living under despotic dominion. These I shall not think it necessary to particularize.

Every free government is more, or less, elective. The privilege of choosing those, who are to govern them, is, to every people possessing it, a blessing of inestimable importance; and like other blessings, brings with it the corresponding duties. Out of it particularly arises the

1. *Great duty of free citizens, which is to Elect always, as far as may be, Rulers, possessing the several characteristics, mentioned in the preceding discourse:* such as are sincere; just; benevolent; disposed to respect the laws of their country; pious; exemplary; industrious; and thus prepared to select for subordinate offices, whenever vested with the power of selecting, men of the same character.

That such Rulers are agreeable to the Will of God; and that he has required all Rulers to be such; cannot be questioned. No more can it be questioned, that one great reason, why He has required them to be of this character, is the establishment, in this way, of the happiness of the people, whom they rule. In every ordinance of this nature, God has directly consulted the happiness of his creatures; and has undoubtedly chosen the very best means of accomplishing it. The establishment of national happiness, then, demands indispensably, that Rulers be of this character. But in the case supposed, the people themselves elect their Rulers. They are therefore bound, indispensably, to elect such, and such only, as are agreeable to the will of God, as unfolded in his Word; such, and such only, as will contribute directly to the establishment of public happiness.

Every People ought to remember, *that in this case, the magistracy is of their own creation;* that just such men are introduced into

it, as they please; and that, if they are not men of wisdom and virtue, the electors are the sole and blameworthy cause. In the very act of electing weak and wicked men to places of magistracy, they testify publicly to God, and the world, that they choose to have weak and wicked men for their rulers. All the evils of a weak and wicked administration of government are, therefore, chargeable, in the first instance, and in the prime degree, to themselves only. By what solemn obligations, then, are they bound to take the most effectual care, that those, whom they elect, be men of acknowledged wisdom and virtue! To choose men of the contrary character is to rebel against the known Will of God; to sport with their own happiness; and to hazard that of their posterity. The only part of this subject, about which a question will be raised, and the part, about which no question can, consistently either with the Scriptures or Common Sense, be ever raised, is the declaration, *that a Ruler ought to be a virtuous man.* To the question concerning this subject the scriptural answer is short: *As a roaring lion, and a raging bear; so is a wicked Ruler over the poor people.* This, it is to be remembered, is the decision, not of *Solomon* only, but of God. Common sense, directed by its own unerring rule of experience, has regularly given the same decision; and mustered before the eyes of mankind a long host of tyrants and public plunderers, of profligate legislators and abandoned magistrates, whose names have been followed by the hisses, and loaded with the execrations, of mankind. Virtuous Rulers, on the contrary, have always, unless in times of peculiar violence, and prejudice, been seen, and acknowledged, to be public blessings. Indeed, it may be doubted whether the general proposition, now under consideration, was ever seriously questioned by a sober man. All the doubts concerning it, all the opposition which it has met with, seem to have arisen in seasons of party and dissension; from the wish to carry some favourite point, or the desire of advancing to place and power some favourite person.

In the preceding discourse, I have illustrated this subject, in a summary manner, from *the political history of Judah and Israel, recorded in the Scriptures.* This illustration, corresponding exactly with every other of the same nature, and in the light and conviction, which it communicates, totally superior to them all, deserves to be resumed in this place, and to be insisted on particularly: much more particularly, indeed, than the present occasion will permit. Every virtuous prince of *Judah* was regularly a public blessing; beloved of his people; devoted to the advancement, and sedulously engaged in employing the means of accomplishing the actual, and extensive, advancement, of their happiness; the acknowledged object of peculiar Divine favour; the cause, in this manner, for which peculiar blessings descended on his nation; and the honourable instrument of producing a sudden, general, and important reformation, not only in his court, but throughout his

kingdom. Whenever such a Prince ascended the throne, piety and morality immediately lifted up their heads, and began to find friends to exert their influence, to abash vice, to silence murmurs, to diminish sufferings, and to create, what they always create, public and individual happiness. Such Princes, also, regularly appointed, so far as it was in their power, men, resembling themselves, to the subordinate offices of government; and thus stationed public benefactors in every corner of their country. For all these reasons, their names, as a sweet memorial, have been wafted down the stream of time with distinction and honour, and have commanded the esteem of every succeeding generation. Such Rulers were *Moses*, *Joshua*, *Gideon*, *Deborah*, *Samuel*, *David*, *Solomon* before his declension, *Jehoshaphat Hezekiah*, *Josiah*, and *Nehemiah*. Such, also, were the brave and virtuous *Maccabees*. I shall only add, that these Rulers strenuously defended the country, which they governed.

Take, now, the reverse of this picture. The wicked Princes, to whose dominion these nations were at times subjected, blasted both their virtue and their happiness. *Ahaz*, *Manasseh*, *Amon*, and *the three last Kings* of *Judah*, were malignant, and affecting, examples of this truth. Weak, as well as wicked, these Princes ruined their people at home, and provided no means for their defence against enemies abroad. With an unobstructed, and terrible rapidity, the nation, which they ruled, slid down the steep of declension, and plunged suddenly into the gulf at the bottom.

Still more instructive is the account, given us concerning the Kings of *Israel*. Of *Jeroboam*, the first of these princes, the most dreadful of all characters is communicated to us in this remarkable declaration; that *he sinned, and made Israel to sin.* A polluted, and profligate wretch himself, he converted all around him into profligates; and began a corruption of religion and morals, which, extending its baleful influence through every succeeding age, terminated in the final ruin of his country. The evils introduced by him operated with a commanding and universal efficacy; and they were cherished and promoted by *Nadab* his son, *Baasha his* murderer, *Elah his* son, and *Zimri his* murderer; and by *Omri*, *Ahab*, and every one who followed them. By their pestilential example, and under their deadly influence, the nation became abandoned. Truth, Justice, and Piety, sighed their last farewell to the reprobated race, and took their final flight. A nuisance to the world, and an object of the Divine abhorrence, the unhappy nation became lost to every hope of recovery; and was finally given up as a prey to the *Assyrian;* at that time the general scourge, and destroyer, of mankind.

It is impossible for any people, with its eyes open, to wish for such Rulers, as these. When it is remembered, that this testimony concerning evil Rulers is the testimony of God Himself; that the same causes will always produce the same effects; and

that evil Rulers were no more injurious to *Israel*, than they will be to every other People, governed by them; it is plain, that no people can elect such Rulers, without assuring themselves, that, in this very act, they are accomplishing their own ruin. A nation, which elects wicked Rulers, it ought ever to be remembered, is chargeable, not only with the guilt of being corrupted, as *Israel* was, but with the additional and peculiar guilt, also, of originating the means of its own corruption. It not only *becomes* wicked, *but makes itself wicked*, by giving to evil men the power and influence which enable them to spread the plague of vice through every part of the political body. What man of common sense, and sober reflection, can consent to make himself chargeable with these evils?

But it may be said, that those, who elect, will often be unable to distinguish virtuous men from such as are not virtuous. I answer, that Churches of Christ are also unable to make this discrimination with certainty; yet, wherever they are faithful and vigilant, they find no serious difficulty in keeping themselves, to a good degree, pure, and safe from gross and unhappy mixtures. I answer further, that a steady, regular aim, on the part of a whole nation, or other body politic, to choose virtuous Rulers, and none but such as are virtuous, will ordinarily accomplish this invaluable purpose. Should it fail in any instance; the nation will still have done its duty. As to extreme cases; such as those, in which no virtuous man can be found to fill the office contemplated; they must occur so rarely, as hardly to require rules of direction. It will always be in the power of a people to select from the candidates the best man; and such a selection will undoubtedly answer the demands of duty in a case of this nature. The true difficulty does not lie in our inability to determine who are virtuous men; nor in their want of the proper qualifications for office; but in the want of a fixed and general determination to choose them; in our defective estimate of the importance of virtue to public office; in our preference of *other* qualifications to *this;* in party attachment; in personal favouritism; and in gross and guilty indifference to the Public Good. All these are deplorable prejudices, and palpable crimes; miserably weak, as well as dangerously sinful; fraught with innumerable evils, not always immediate, perhaps, but always near, certain, and dreadful.

2. *Subjects are bound faithfully to Obey their Rulers.*

Concerning this truth, *in the abstract*, there will probably be no debate, except what is excited either by passion or by frenzy. The only serious questions, which can rationally be made here are: *How far is this obedience to extend?* and *What are the cases, in which it may be lawfully refused?* The importance of these questions must be deeply felt by every man. By *St. Paul, every soul* is required to *be subject to the higher powers;* because, as he informs us, *the powers, that be, are ordained of God.* By the same Apostle we are further told, that *whosoever resisteth the power, re-*

sisteth the ordinance of God, and shall receive to himself damnation; that is, not damnation in the proper sense, or as the word is now understood, but the condemnation, denounced by the law of God against all sin. By *St. Peter* we are directed to *submit to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the King, as Supreme; or unto Governors*, that is, generally, to all persons possessing lawful authority; *for such*, he declares, *is the will of God.* With these precepts in his hand, no Christian can fail to believe the questions, mentioned above, to be of incalculable importance to him, and his fellow-men. It is as really the duty of a Minister to explain this part of the Gospel to his congregation, and to enforce upon them these precepts, as any other. Nor can he be at all excused in passing them by. I shall, therefore, exhibit to you, on the present occasion, my own views concerning this long, and vehemently disputed topic.

In the first place: *Subjects are not bound to obey the commands of magistrates, as such, when they are not warranted by Law.*

The law creates magistrates; and defines all their powers, and rights. Whenever they require that, which is not warranted by law, they cease to act as magistrates; and return to the character of mere citizens. In this character they have plainly no authority over their fellow-citizens. It is not the *man*, but the *magistrate*, whom God requires us to obey.

Secondly. *Subjects are bound to obey magistrates, when acting agreeably to the laws, in all cases not contrary to the will of God, as unfolded in the Scriptures.*

This I take to be the true import of the directions, given by *St. Peter* and *St. Paul.* These Apostles cannot, I think, be rationally supposed to enjoin upon subjects obedience to those commands of a Ruler, which contravene the laws of the land; or which lie beyond the limits of his lawful authority. They require our obedience to the magistrate, *acting as a magistrate*, or within the limits of his lawful authority; and not to the magistrate, *transgressing the bounds of law*, and acting, merely as a private individual, according to the dictates of his own discretion, caprice, or whim. Much less can they be supposed to require our obedience to those commands of a Ruler, which are opposed to the Law of God. Whether we should *obey God rather than men*, can never be seriously made a question by Common sense, any more than by Piety.

There may be, there often are, cases, in which, from motives of prudence and expediency, we may feel ourselves bound to obey magistrates, for the time at least, when acting beyond their authority, and aside from law. This subject is too extensive, to be particularly considered on the present occasion. I shall only observe, therefore, that we are bound to fix in our minds a high sense of the duty, and importance, of obeying rulers; and of the danger, always threatening the public peace, and prosperity, from

unnecessary disobedience. Such a sense will, it is believed, prevent most of the real difficulties, to be apprehended in cases of this nature.

The observations, already made concerning this general subject, will prepare the way for settling our opinions concerning a particular question, involved in it, which is of high importance to mankind. It is this: *Whether a nation is warranted to resist Rulers, when seriously encroaching on its liberties?* It is my intention to confine the answer, which will now be given to this question, to *the lawfulness of such resistance. The expediency of it*, I shall suppose to be granted; so far as the safety, and success, of the resistance is concerned. In other words, I shall suppose the People, immediately interested in the question, to have as fair an opportunity, as can be reasonably expected, of preserving, or acquiring political liberty; and of establishing, after the contest is ended, a free and happy government. In this case, the resistance in question is, in my own view, warranted by the Law of God. It is well known, that this opinion has been adopted by some wise and good men, and denied by others. But the reasons, alleged by both classes for their respective doctrines, have, so far as they have fallen under my observation, been less satisfactory, than I wished.

A nation, already free, ought, whenever encroachments upon its freedom are begun, to reason in some such manner, as the following:

"*Despotism, according to the universal and uniform experience of man, has regularly been fatal to every human interest.* It has attacked private happiness, and invaded public prosperity. It has multiplied sufferings without number, and beyond degree. It has visited, regularly, the nation, the neighbourhood, and the fireside; and carried with it public sorrow, and private anguish. Personal Liberty has withered at its touch; and national safety, peace, and prosperity, have faded at its approach. Enjoyment has fled before it; life expired; and hope vanished. Evils of this magnitude have all been suffered, also, merely to gratify the caprice, the pride, the ambition, the avarice, the resentment, or the voluptuousness, of one, or a few, individuals; each of whose interests is of the same value in the sight of God, and no more, than those of every other individual belonging to the nation. Can there be a reason; do the Scriptures furnish one; why the millions of the present generation, and the more numerous millions of succeeding generations, should suffer these evils, merely to gratify the lusts of ten, twenty, or one hundred, of their fellowmen?"

"If an affirmative answer should be given to this question; let it be remembered, that *the same despotic power has, with equal regularity, cut off from subjects the means of usefulness and duty.* Mankind are sent into the world, to serve God, and do good to

each other. If these things are not done; we live in vain, and worse than in vain. If the means of doing them are taken away; we are prevented, just so far, from answering the end of our creation. In vain is mental and bodily energy, in vain are talents, opportunities, and privileges, bestowed by our Creator, if they are to be wrested from us by our fellow-men; or the means of exerting them taken away. In vain are we constituted Parents, if we are precluded from procuring the comfortable sustenance, providing for the education, and promoting the piety and salvation, of our offspring. In vain are we made children, if we are forbidden to perform the filial duties. In vain are we placed in the other relations of life, if we are prohibited from performing the duties, to which they give birth. Take away usefulness from man; and there is nothing left, which is good; but every thing which is bad. This usefulness, however, Despots have in a dreadful manner either prevented, or destroyed. They have shrunk the talents, and palsied the energy, of the mind; have shut the door of knowledge, and blocked up the path of virtue; have wilted the human race into sloth and imbecility, and lowered the powers of man almost to the level of brutism. *The little spot of Greece* exhibited more energy, and more specimens of mental greatness, in one hundred and fifty years, than the *Chinesian World* has exhibited in two thousand."

"But this is not all. *Despotic Rulers have exercised a most malignant influence upon the Virtue of mankind.* They have assumed the prerogatives of Heaven; and prescribed as the will of God, a system of religious doctrines, and duties, to their subjects. This system has invariably been absurd, gross, and monstrous. The Morality, which it has enjoined, has been chiefly a code of crimes, fitter for the regulation of banditti, than of sober men. The Religion, which it has taught, has been a scheme of impiety. Yet this system they have enforced by the most terrible penalties; by the loss of property, liberty, and life; by the gaol and the gibbet, the wheel and the rack, the faggot and the cross. Blood has stained the sceptre; martyrs have surrounded the throne."

"Even this is not all. *Despots, bad men themselves, must be served by bad men.* The baleful and deleterious influence of the head and the members united, has extended every where; even to the corner and the cottage; and, like the deadly damp of the cavern, has imperceptibly, and silently, extinguished light, and life, wherever it has spread. Virtue has fallen amid the exhalation, unobserved and unknown. In its place has arisen, and flourished, a train of monstrous corruptions, which, with continually increasing strength, have finally gained an entire possession of the land. Degenerated beyond recall, and polluted beyond hope, a people, under this influence, has sunk into remediless ruin; and only continued to exist, until Mercy was wearied out by their profligacy, and reluctantly gave the sign for Vengeance to sweep them away.

One regular and complete example of all these evils is given us by the voice of God Himself in the kingdom of *Israel*. Profane history records a multitude. Is there any principle, either scriptural, or rational, which demands of any nation such a sacrifice?"

"But, were we to admit, that such a sacrifice might lawfully be made by us, *so far as ourselves only are concerned*, it is further to be remembered, that *we are entrusted with all the possessions, privileges, blessings, and hopes, of our offspring through every succeeding generation*. Guardians appointed by God himself, how can we fail of discharging punctiliously this sacred trust? The deposit is of value, literally immense. It involves the education, the comfort, the safety, the usefulness, the religious system, the morals, the piety, and the eternal life of millions, which can neither be known nor calculated. This is a trust, which cannot lawfully be given up, unless in obedience to a known and unquestionable command of God: and no such command can be pleaded. Equally important is it, that we prevent, (for, under God, none but we can prevent) the contrary innumerable and immeasurable evils."

"At the same time, it is ever to be remembered, that, under a free government, all the blessings, which I have mentioned, so far as they are found in the present world, live and prosper. Such a government is the soil and the climate, the rain and the sunshine of human good. Despotism, on the contrary, is the combined drought and sterility of *Nubia*, the frost and darkness of *Zembla;* amid which, virtue, comfort, and safety, can never spring."

With these considerations in view, it is unquestionably evident to me, that nations are bound, so far as it is possible, to maintain their freedom, and to resist every serious encroachment upon it, with such efforts, as are necessary for its preservation.

Thirdly. *Subjects are bound to obey Every Magistrate, acting lawfully, in the same manner.*

The Constable and Tithing-man are, in their own sphere, as truly armed with the authority of the State, as the Governor and the Prince: and the Divine Command is, *Submit to every ordinance of man*, that is, to governmental authority in every department, *for the Lord's sake*. To resist Rulers in *high* stations may be productive of more mischief than to resist those in *low* ones. In other respects the guilt of the resistance is the same.

3. *Subjects are bound to Honour their Rulers.*

They are bound to treat them with all the becoming marks of respect and reverence. Rulers, when treated with little external respect, will soon cease to be respected.

They are bound to support them honourably. This is one of the few doctrines, in which all ages and nations have united. Avarice alone has, in any case, prompted men to believe the contrary doctrine, or hindered them from carrying *this* into proper execution.

An honourable support to Rulers is that, which the general sense of propriety pronounces to be of this nature.

Subjects are bound also to Speak Respectfully of their Rulers. On this subject it will be necessary to be somewhat more particular.

Thou shalt not speak evil of the Ruler of thy People, is certainly a precept, dictated by Reason, as well as Revelation. Still, it cannot, I think, be denied, that the faults of Rulers are, on certain occasions, to be exposed, as well as those of private individuals. The Prophets frequently exposed the faults of their Rulers; and Christ and his Apostles, those of the magistrates of their day. The question, When and in what manner this may be done by us, becomes, therefore, a serious topic of investigation.

Concerning this subject the following thoughts have occurred to me.

First. *Censures of Rulers, in order to be lawful, must be true.*

Secondly. *There must be a real and solid reason for uttering them.*

It is not enough, that a Ruler has done evil. In order to be justified in publishing it, we must be assured, that some important good will, with high probability, spring from the publication. The evil, arising from this source, is, in the abstract, always real and important. Where there is no good, sufficiently probable, and sufficiently important, to balance this evil, we cannot be vindicated in bringing it into existence.

Thirdly. *We must sincerely aim at doing this good.*

A watchful and faithful determination of this kind, accompanied by a scrupulous and conscientious sense of its high importance, as a part of our duty, will ordinarily preserve us from the danger of transgression. He, who in the proper and Evangelical manner has formed such a determination, and made it an habitual part of his character, will almost always perform his duty with respect to this subject; and rarely, or never, censure a Ruler, unless on solid grounds.

Fourthly. *Such censures should in all ordinary cases be uttered in the language of Moderation, and not of Invective, or Ridicule.*

A great part of the evils, done in this way, flow from *the Manner, in which the Censure is conducted.* Where this is sober and temperate, there is usually little room to fear. Where it is not, the Censurer is always exposed to the danger of Criminality.

4. *Subjects are bound to Defend their Rulers.*

This duty equally includes opposition to private and civil violence, and resistance to open hostility; and is so obvious and acknowledged, as to need no illustration. In defending their Rulers, subjects are only employed in ultimately defending themselves.

5. *Subjects are bound to furnish all necessary supplies for the exigences of Government.*

For this cause, says *St. Paul*, that is, *for conscience sake, pay ye tribute also. For they*, that is, Rulers, *are God's ministers; attending continually upon this very thing. Render, therefore, to all, their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, and custom to whom custom.* Taxes are, ordinarily, the only national supplies. Every public object, almost, demands some expense; in peace not a little; in war much more. If the necessary supplies be not furnished; these objects must either languish, or fail. God has, therefore, wisely and benevolently required mankind to render tribute and custom, when lawfully demanded. It is to be remembered, that this requisition is made by Infinite authority; and can no more be dispensed with, than any other command of God.

6. *Subjects are bound to Pray for their Rulers.*

To the performance of this duty no virtuous subject can ever want motives. The arduous nature of those duties, to which Rulers are called; the responsibility of their stations; the difficulties which they have to encounter; and the discouragements, under which they labour; teach us in the strongest manner, that they daily, and eminently, need the Divine Blessing. This blessing, like all others, will be given only in answer to prayer: to the Prayers, indeed, of the Rulers themselves; and still more to the united prayers of both Rulers and people. Mere benevolence then, mere compassion for men, struggling with peculiar difficulties in their behalf, demands this duty from subjects.

At the same time, it is loudly called for by the regard, which we owe to the Public Welfare. National blessings are given in answer to national prayers. Of these blessings Rulers are the chief instruments. But they cannot be the means of good to a nation, unless their efforts are crowned with the Divine blessing. If nations, then, would receive public blessings; they are bound, indispensably, to supplicate for their Rulers the favour of God.

Finally. God has required such prayers at our hands. *I exhort, therefore*, says St. Paul, *that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty; for this is good and acccptable in the sight of God our Saviour.*

The only remark, which I shall annex to this discourse, is; *that, connected with the preceding one, it shows, unanswerably, the groundlessness and folly of an observation, repeated proverbially by multitudes of men in this and other countries*, viz. *that "Religion has nothing to do with Politics, or, in other words, with Government."*

These discourses, summarily as the subjects of them have been considered, prove beyond all reasonable debate, that the whole vindicable conduct of Rulers towards their Subjects, and of Sub-

jects towards their Rulers, is nothing but a mere collection of duties, objects of moral obligation, required by God, and indispensably owed to Him by men. The Christian Religion, therefore, the rule of all duty, and involving all moral obligation, is so far from having nothing to do with this subject, that it is inseparably interwoven with every part of it. Accordingly, the Bible regulates, and, were it not sinfully prevented from its proper influence, would exactly and entirely control, all the political doctrines and actions of men. It is indeed as easy, and as common, to deny truth and refuse to perform our duty, to disobey God and injure men, in political concerns, as in any other. In truth, there has been no field of iniquity, more extensive than this: none, in which more enormous crimes, or more terrible sufferings, have existed. All these crimes, and sufferings, have sprung from the ignorance, or the disobedience, of the Scriptures. Were *they* allowed to govern the political conduct of mankind; both the crimes, and the sufferings, would vanish; every duty both of Rulers and subjects would be performed; and every interest would be completely secured. In what manner the doctrine against which I am contending ever came to be received by any man, who was not peculiarly weak, or wicked, I am at a loss to determine. It would seem, that even the careless and gross examination of the most heedless reflector must have evinced both its folly and falsehood. A dream is not more unfounded: the decisions of frenzy are not more wild. To villains in power, or in pursuit of power, office, and public plunder, it is undoubtedly a most convenient doctrine; as it will quiet the reproaches of conscience, where conscience has not ceased to reproach, and throw the gate, which opens to every crime, and selfish gratification, from its hinges. To Subjects, to a State, to a Nation, it is literally fatal. The people which have adopted it, may be certainly pronounced to have bidden a final adieu to its peace and its happiness, its virtue and its safety.

SERMON CXV.

SIXTH COMMANDMENT.—KILLING; WHEN LAWFUL, AND WHEN UNLAWFUL.

EXODUS XX. 13.—*Thou shalt not kill.*

IN the five preceding discourses, I have considered summarily *several classes of duties, involved in the fifth Command.* Had I no other object before me, beside the examination of this precept, I should feel myself obliged to investigate, also, the mutual duties of men in various other relations of life; particularly those of husbands and wives, masters and servants, ministers and their congregations. All these, together with the duties of friends and neighbours, of the aged and the young, are, I think, obviously included in this precept; and are of sufficient importance to claim, not only a discussion, but a more extensive and minute investigation, than I have given to those, already examined. But a Work of this nature, although it may seem large, must necessarily be compendious. The field is too vast even to be wandered over by any single effort; and many parts of it must be left unexplored by any traveller.

The command, which is given us in the text, is expressed in the most absolute manner: *Thou shalt not kill. To kill*, is the thing forbidden; and by the words it is forbidden in all cases whatever. Whenever we kill any living creature, therefore, we are guilty of a transgression of this command; unless we are permitted to take away the life in question *by an exception, which God Himself has made to the rule.*

This consideration of *the absolute universality* of the command in the text ought invariably to be remembered in all our comments upon it. These, it is ever to be remembered, are the words, which God Himself has chosen. They accord, therefore, with the dictates of Infinite Wisdom concerning this subject; and bind us with Infinite authority. Man cannot alter them. Man cannot lawfully originate an exception to them, nor in any other manner limit their import. Every comment upon them must, of course, be derived from the words themselves; or from other precepts; or from comments on this precept, found in other parts of the Scriptures. At the same time, a scrupulous attention to the words themselves will, if I mistake not, remove several difficulties concerning this subject, and contribute not a little towards settling, finally, some important doctrines of Morality.

In examining this subject I shall endeavour to point out,

I. *Those instances in which life may be lawfully taken away, agreeably to scriptural exceptions under this law;*

II. *Some of those instances, in which life is destroyed in contradiction to this law.*

I. *I shall mention those instances, in which life may be lawfully taken away under scriptural exceptions to this law.*

1. *The life of Animals may be lawfully taken away in two cases: when they are necessary for our food; and when they are hostile and dangerous to us.*

In Genesis ix. 3, *God said to Noah and his sons, Every thing that moveth shall be meat for you: even as the green herb have I given you all things.* That this permission was necessary we know, because it was given. But if it was necessary; men had no right to eat the flesh of animals before it was given. The same thing is evident, also, from the terms of the permission, *Even as the green herb have I given you all things.* If God gave men all things, that is, all animals, to be their food; then men have no original, natural, or previous right to use them for food. Accordingly, the Antediluvians, abandoned as they were, appear, plainly, never to have eaten animal food. *Noah* and his descendants began this practice, under this permission. Here is found the only right of mankind to this food. Animals belonged originally, and solely, to their Creator. We, therefore, could have no right to their lives, unless He, who alone possessed that right, had transferred it to us.

From these observations it is plain, that Infidels, who deny the Divine revelation of the Scriptures, can plead no right to eat the flesh of animals. The only being, who can possibly communicate this right to us, is God: since He is the only Being, who possesses the right to dispose of them. But God has no where communicated this right to mankind, unless He has done it in the Scriptures. But this communication they deny to have been made; and are, therefore, without any warrant for the use of animal food. Nor can they ever make use of it, without contravening the dictates of a good conscience, and violating the plainest principles of justice and humanity.

The arguments, by which Infidels have endeavoured to defend this conduct in themselves, are, in my view, miserable fetches of a disingenuous mind, struggling hard to justify itself in a practice, which it is loth to give up; and not the honest reasons of fair conviction. They are these. "It is the analogy of nature, that the stronger should prey upon the weaker: that we feed animals, and have, therefore, a right to their lives, and their flesh, as a retribution for our kindness to them: and that, if *we* did not destroy *them*, they would multiply in such a manner, as ultimately to destroy *us*.

These reasons are characteristically suited to the mouth of a *wolf* or a *tiger;* but proceed with a very ill grace from the mouth

of a *man*. Were a savage, of superior force, to attack an Infidel, plunder his property, and destroy his life, in order to convert his flesh into food; and were he, beforehand, to allege, as the justifying reason for this conduct, that it was the analogy of nature for the stronger to prey upon the weaker; the argument, it is believed, would scarcely satisfy the Infidel. Were the *Ox* endued with speech, he might unanswerably reply to the allegation, drawn from the kindness of men to oxen, that their labour was an ample compensation for their food; and that men fed them for their own benefit, and not theirs. With respect to the third argument, he might ask, without fearing any reply: Where, and when, did oxen ever multiply in such a manner, as to become dangerous to mankind? If Infidels can be satisfied with these arguments for the use of flesh; we can no longer wonder, that they are equally well satisfied with similar arguments against the Revelation of the Scriptures.

The truth is; they are not thus satisfied with either the one or the other. Inclination, and not conviction, is, probably, the source of their conduct in both cases. Were they as scrupulous, as all men ought to be; they would, like the Hindoos, and even the Antediluvians, abstain entirely from eating the flesh of animals.

Animals, hostile and dangerous to men, God has not only permitted, but commanded, us to put to death; at least whenever they have intentionally destroyed human life. In Genesis ix. he says to Noah and his Children, *Surely your blood of your lives, will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it; and at the hand of man.* Agreeably to this law, which makes animals in this situation punishable with death, the *ox*, *which gored a man, or woman*, was commanded to *be stoned.* As the beast, which had perpetrated this act, could be punished only by men; men were required to put him to death. It will not, I suppose, be contended, that we are not warranted to anticipate this mischief, and prevent the tiger from shedding human blood, as well as to destroy him after his depredations are completed.

In all other cases we are unwarranted to take away the life of animals, because God has given us no warrant.

There are persons, who destroy their domestic animals by compelling them to labour beyond their strength, or their capacity of enduring fatigue. There are others, who beat them, under the influence of furious passions, in immoderate degrees; or afflict them by other exertions of violence and cruelty. There are others, who deny them the necessary food, and keep them, continually, half famished through hunger. There are others, who take away the lives of birds, fishes, and other small animals, for the mere purpose of indulging the pleasure of hunting, or fishing. And there are others still, who find an inhuman pleasure in merely distressing and torturing this humble and defenceless class of crea

tures. Of the first of these modes of cruelty, horseracing is a scandalous example. A brutal specimen of the last is presented to us in cockfighting.

A righteous man, says *Solomon*, *regardeth the life of his beast;* Proverbs xii. 10.; that is, a righteous man realizes, in a just manner, the value of the life of his beast, entertains a steady conviction, that he has no right either unnecessarily to shorten, or embitter it; and feels the solemn obligation, which he is under, to use all the means, dictated by humanity and prudence for preserving the life of those animals, which are under his care, and for rendering them comfortable.

In all these instances of cruelty the life of animals is not immediately taken away. But in all of them it is either suddenly, or gradually, destroyed; and often with greater cruelty, and more abominable wickedness, where the process is slow, than where it is summary. The spirit of this command is violated in them all.

Children, who are either taught, or permitted, to exercise cruelty towards animals in early life, are efficaciously fitted, in this manner, to exercise cruelty towards their fellow-men. If they escape the dungeon, or the gibbet, they will be little indebted for this privilege, to those, who had the charge of their education. It is remarkable, that the law, which punished murder with death, was immediately subjoined to the permission to take the life, and eat the flesh, of animals. In this fact, if I mistake not, the Creator has taught us, that the transition from shedding *their* blood to shedding *that of man* is so short, and obvious, as to render a new law necessary for the prevention of murder: a law, which, it would seem, had not been demanded by the circumstances of preceding ages.

2. *The life of Man may, also, be lawfully taken away in certain cases, according to the Scriptures.*

This may be done, in the first place, *when this act is necessary for our own defence.* A sufficient warrant for this is given us *in the case of the thief*, mentioned Exodus xxii. 2. *If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die; there shall no blood be shed for* HIM. In this case, the thief was killed in the defence of a man and his family: and the act of killing him is plainly warranted. By parity of reason the warrant extends to all cases, which in substance compare with this. In other words, we are justified in putting to death the person, who assails the life of ourselves, or others, wrongfully, whenever our own defence, or theirs, makes it necessary.

In every case of this nature, we are, however, indispensably bound to be sure, tha we act only in the defence of ourselves or others; and that there are no perceptible means, beside this extreme one, of warding off the threatened evil. Wherever such means exist; it is our indispensable duty to employ them. We are

bound, also, in no case to take away life for an injury, already done; and in the indulgence of anger, malice, or revenge. At the same time, if the right invaded, or the injury to be done, is of moderate importance; we are prohibited from proceeding to this extremity.

On this ground alone, that it is an act of self-defence, can *War be justified.* Aggressive war is nothing but a complication of robbery and murder. Defensive war is merely the united efforts of several persons to defend themselves against a common inroad, or enemy. It is, therefore, equally lawful with self-defence in an individual. By aggressive war, here, I do not intend that, which is first commenced under the name of war; but the original outrage, or series of outrages, out of which the war has lawfully arisen, on the part of the injured nation.

A numerous, and on many accounts respectable, class of Christians, the *Friends*, have denied the lawfulness of war. It is to be wished, that the world would universally adopt the practice of these pacific men. But so long as the present disposition of mankind predominates; so long as men will attack, and destroy, the life, liberty, and property, of their fellow-men; defensive war is absolutely necessary, and absolutely lawful. A nation, which should adopt the contrary doctrine, would be undone. *This society of Christians could not possibly exist in a national state.* The province of *Pennsylvania*, and perhaps the rest of the *British* Colonies together with it, came very near being finally destroyed by the prevalence of this very doctrine in its House of Representatives. Such a nation would publicly proclaim itself an unresisting prey to the rest of mankind; and, like the deer, would become a victim to the fangs of the wolf and the tiger.

That War is lawful in the abstract we know with certainty; because it has been directly commanded, unequivocally approved, and miraculously prospered, by God. He commanded *Israel* to make war upon *Amalek*, until the name of that guilty nation should be blotted out from under heaven. In the same manner, He commanded them to make war upon the inhabitants of *Canaan;* and approved of their conduct in making war upon that people. In the same manner He commmanded the *Israelites* to make war repeatedly upon *Midian* and upon *Hazor;* censured the tribe of *Reuben*, and by his Angel commanded the Israelites to *curse Meroz*, because they neglected, or refused, to make active exertions in this war. He also miraculously aided the *Israelites* against *Midian*, *Amalek*, the *Philistines*, and *others*. See Exodus xvii. 8. Judges vii. 1 Samuel vii. and 2 Samuel v.

But all, that has been commanded, approved, and miraculously prospered, by God, is in itself right. For it is impossible, that God should either command, or approve of, that which is wrong. The only question, therefore, which can be rationally made in this

case, is, *In what circumstances is war lawful?* With this question it cannot be supposed, that I have here any concern.

Secondly. *The life of man may be lawfully taken away, when by crimes it has been forfeited to the law of the land.*

Mankind are commanded, in the orignal law concerning murder, given us in Gen. ix. to put the murderer to death. *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.* In the *Mosaic* code the same punishment is annexed to a variety of crimes; such as adultery, filial stubbornness, idolatry, and several others. In each of these cases men are *required* to take away human life, as the proper punishment of a crime, by which it has been forfeited; and are not merely *warranted to do this by a permission.* In the former case, the command is addressed to all men. Accordingly we find it repeated by *Solomon*, as an universal precept, in the most absolute terms. *A man, that doeth violence to the blood of any person*, he *shall flee to the pit: let no man stay him.* It is also made a part of the *Jewish* law in various places. Exodus xxi. 12, 14.; Lev. xxiv. 17.; and very comprehensively, Numb. xxxv. 16, &c. In the latter cases, the command is addressed to the *Israelites.* The *Jewish* law is binding upon other nations only in those cases, whose nature is unchangeable and universal; or in those, in which the circumstances are precisely the same. Still, this law is a complete proof of the absolute rectitude of that conduct, which it prescribes. For, God cannot possibly prescribe that which is wrong. The same law also teaches, that, in the same circumstances, the same conduct may, with the strictest propriety, be pursued by *us.* For, God cannot command that, which, in the given circumstances, is unwise. It is evidently lawful, therefore, for other nations, as well as the Jews, to put men to death for other crimes beside murder.

But in every case of this nature, we are, in my view, forbidden by the general spirit of the Gospel, and, as I apprehend, by the plain dictates of Reason, also, to take away life, wherever a milder punishment may be safely substituted. Murder, we are bound invariably to punish with death. For every other crime, a milder penalty may, and ought to be, adopted, whenever it will answer the proper ends of punishment. All evils, which are suffered beyond the necessary purposes of penal jurisprudence, are suffered gratuitously; or, in other words, without any justifying cause. In this case, the infliction ceases to be justice; and becomes oppression.

It is ever to be remembered, that, even when the punishment of death is lawfully to be inflicted, it can be warrantably executed only by the magistrate; and by him, only when acting according to the decisions of law. Private individuals have no more right to interfere, than if the man condemned were innocent; and were they to lay violent hands on him, although proved to be guilty, and rightfully condemned, they would themselves become mur-

derers. Nor can the Judge lawfully condemn any man, whatever he may think concerning the rectitude of the decision, unless upon adequate legal testimony, fairly exhibited in open court, and in exact conformity to the modes of trial, by law established. Neither can the Executive Magistrate warrantably do any thing, in a case of this nature, beside merely executing the sentence of the Judge; whether he esteems that sentence just, or unjust. The time, the manner, and the circumstances, of execution, ordered by law, he is bound exactly to observe. A criminal, although condemned to death, may, instead of being executed, be murdered; and that as truly, as any other man. The Sheriff, also, can easily lay aside the character of a Magistrate, and assume that of a Murderer.

At the same time, all magistrates, in whatever station they act, are indispensably prohibited from the exercise of hatred, or revenge, in every form, and degree, against the criminal. Magistrates here, as well as elsewhere, are *Ministers of God for good to his people.* In the awful employment of executing penal justice, it is their unalterable duty to exercise the benevolence of the Gospel; to be exactly just, and faithful; and to *rule in the fear of God.* As instruments in His hand, disposed conscientiously to do that, and that only, which is required by his will, and demanded by the Public safety, they will be approved by Him; and ought ever to be highly honoured by their fellow-citizens. But, if they turn aside from their duty; and indulge their own passions, instead of obeying the dictates of public justice; they assume the character of oppressors, and lay aside that of rulers; merit the severest censures of their fellow-men; and prepare a terrible account of their *stewardship* against the final day.

II. *I shall mention several instances, in which life is destroyed in contradiction to this command.*

Of these, the only one which I shall mention at the present time, is that, which is appropriately called Murder; usually defined to be killing our neighbour with premeditated malice.

On this subject, so long, so often, and so thoroughly, canvassed, so perfectly understood, and so harmoniously considered by mankind, it cannot be necessary to dwell. I shall dismiss it, therefore, with this single observation: that the very necessity of forbidding this crime, a necessity daily and unanswerably manifested, is a most dreadful proof of the excessive depravity of man.

I shall now proceed to make several observations, more necessary, and more instructive to this Audience, concerning several crimes, more or less intimately connected with this subject.

First. *All those actions, which involve murder, are undoubtedly of the same nature.*

Such are the burning of a house, supposed by the Incendiary to be inhabited; making a dangerous leak in a ship, having men on board; shooting, or casting the instruments of death into a crowd,

Treason; Rebellion; and other acts of a similar nature. It is to no purpose, here, for the perpetrator to allege, that death may, possibly, not be the consequence of his nefarious conduct. Had he any other regard to the value of human life, and to the sacred obligation, which he is under, not only not to invade, but to preserve, it, beside what a murderer feels; he would never be guilty of the conduct, nor think of this reason as a justification of it. A bare possibility of this nature must be alleged, if alleged at all, not to convince, but to affront, the understanding.

Secondly. *Under this head are also included all those actions, by which the life of man is destroyed through a criminal Negligence.*

There are many cases, in which we may easily foresee, that the death of others will be a consequence of our negligence. A sacred regard to the value of human life, duly felt by us, would necessarily produce that attentive care, which, so far as is in our power, would insure safety to the lives of our fellow-men.

Thirdly. *To contrive the death of others is a crime of the same general nature.*

The crime of murder lies in the dispositions, and designs, of the heart. To constitute us murderers in the sight of God, it is not necessary, that we should *be guilty of any overt act whatever. It is amply sufficient to contrive the death of others.* So plain is this truth, that it has been generally acknowledged by mankind. The real, and the prime, guilt, probably, almost always lies here. The Providence of God not unfrequently prevents the contrivance from being executed. But the contriver is still a murderer in his sight.

Fourthly. *To wish the death of others, although we form no plans for accomplishing it, is a crime of the same general nature.*

He, who looketh on a woman to lust after her, saith our Saviour, *hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* By parity of reason, wishes indulged against the life of our neighbour, are the commission of murder. There are probably many persons, who secretly wish the death of their fellow-men, and who yet, never form, nor think of forming, any plan to accomplish their death. Most, if not all, of these, perhaps, feel little remorse at the remembrance of their conduct; and probably rarely suspect themselves of being even remotely concerned in transgressing this command. Every such person is grossly deceived; and will be found charged with the guilt of murder at the final Judgment.

Fifthly. *To wound our neighbour, and deprive him of the use of his limbs, or faculties, is a crime of the same nature;* though, I acknowledge, *of inferior guilt.*

Although to destroy another's limbs is not to take away his life; it is yet to take away a part of the usefulness, and comfort, which make life desirable. We may continue to live, when we are rendered chiefly useless, and unhappy. But life itself, so far as this

world is concerned, must be of little value to the possessor. Nor can it easily be believed, that he, whose malevolence can be gratified by depriving his neighbour of his limbs, or other peculiarly important blessings, would, under a little additional provocation, be reluctant to take his life.

Sixthly. *Quarrelling and Fighting are crimes, evidently of the same nature.*

A great part of the murders, committed in this world, are merely the conclusions, or catastrophes, of these crimes. So evident is this, that nothing is more common, with respect to an existing quarrel, than to hear the persons, who mention it, express their apprehensions, that it may terminate in murder. Indeed, the spirit, which begets contentions of this nature, is only an inferior degree of that, which malignantly destroys the life of man. *The beginning of strife*, says Solomon, *is as when one letteth out water:* an evil, the degree, the mischiefs, and the end of which can never be anticipated by the human mind.

Seventhly. *All violent, unreasonable anger, envy, and hatred, are evils of the same nature.*

Christ, commenting on the Sixth Command, says, *Whosoever shall be angry with his brother, without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, or, as Doddridge* seems inclined to render it, "*Thou villain,*" *shall be in danger of Hell-fire.* St. John, in a manner more summary, and still more explicit, observes, *He that hateth his brother is a murderer.* From these passages it is evident, that all the several things, which I have considered as involved in the general crime of murder, or as acts of disobedience to this precept, are actually of this general nature. They are not, indeed, all marked with the same malignity, as the crime, usually known by this name. But they all partake of the same nature; and are either murder in the proper sense; or steps, which lead directly to it; seeds, impregnated with that very poison, which, more perfectly concocted in the future growth of the plant, becomes so rank, and so fatal, to the life of man.

Finally. *I hesitate not to pronounce that unkindness, which, especially when exercised towards inferiors and dependants, wears upon the spirits, and often breaks the hearts of our fellow-creatures, to be a crime of the same nature.*

In order to shorten human life, it is not necessary to use a bludgeon, nor a pistol. Servants may be easily brought to an untimely grave by stinting them with respect to their necessary food, clothes, lodging, or fuel; or by a repetition of tasks, unreasonably burdensome. A delicate, and susceptible, child may be easily driven into a consumption by parental coldness, fretfulness, severity, the denial of necessary indulgencies, or the exaction of undue compliances. Mere conjugal indifference may easily break

the heart of an affectionate wife. Faithless friendship may destroy, at once, the life of a friend. Ungrateful subjects have shortened the life of an affectionate Ruler by their ingratitude merely. Rulers have, probably, in millions of instances, put their subjects to death, without any immediate violence, by the gradual, but sure, operations of a comprehensive and hard-handed oppression.

From these observations it is evident, that Murder in the proper sense, is begun in unkindness: and that unkindness is begun in the early and unrestrained indulgence of human passions. This indulgence, therefore, Parents, and all other Guardians of children, are bound faithfully to restrain, from the beginning. The first tendencies towards cruelty, the first evidences of an unfeeling disposition, should be repressed, discouraged, and, as far as may be, destroyed. Tenderness, on the contrary, a spirit of general benevolence, and an active, affectionate beneficence to others, should be cultivated in every child with care, sedulousness, and constancy resembling that, with which an impassioned florist watches, nurses, and cherishes, a choice flower; procured with great expense from a distant climate; his own favourite possession; pre-eminent for its fragrance and beauty; and regarded by him as the pride, and boast, of the country, in which he lives.

SERMON CXVI.

SIXTH COMMANDMENT.—DUELLING.

EXODUS XX. 13.—*Thou shalt not kill.*

IN the preceding discourse, from these words, I proposed to point out,

I. *Those instances, in which life may be lawfully taken away, agreeably to Scriptural exceptions under this law;*

II. *Some of those instances, in which life is destroyed in contradiction to this law.*

The first of these heads I discussed at that time; and made several observations under the Second. The remaining subjects, included in this division, are *Duelling*, *Suicide*, and *Drunkenness*. The first of these, viz. Duelling, shall be the topic of immediate investigation.

That Duelling is a violation of the command in the text is evident,

1. *From the words of the precept itself;*

Thou shalt not kill.

I have already observed, that these words contain a command entirely absolute, without either condition, or exception. I also observed, that, as this is a command of God, man cannot, without impious presumption, attempt to limit it; and that no other exceptions, therefore, can be made to it, beside those which God Himself has made. But God has made no exception, which the most ingenious mind can so construe, as to render it, even in the most remote degree, favourable to Duelling. As this assertion will neither be denied nor doubted; it will only be necessary to add, that this precept stands in full force against Duelling; and that every Duel is a gross violation of its whole authority.

Nor is this all. Duelling is a violation of this precept, of the very worst kind; superior in its guilt to most other crimes of the same nature, and inferior to none. For,

2. *A Duel is always the result of a design to take away human life.*

I say *always*. It is not, however, my intention to deny, that there may be exceptions to this general declaration. But these are probably as few, as to any general rule concerning human conduct. The challenge originally contains a proposition to kill, or to be killed. It is accepted with an expectation of killing, or of being killed. Each of the combatants, also, takes his aim at the seat of life, and intends to destroy his antagonist, if he can. No

pretence, therefore, is more unfounded, than that duellists do not design to kill each other.

3. *Duelling always involves Efforts to destroy life.*

The weapons, used in it, are always the proper instruments of death; and they are used with the utmost skill, and care, which the parties possess, for the direct purpose of producing this dreadful catastrophe.

4. *Men are put to death in Duels with more Deliberation, than in almost any other case whatever.*

The Challenger has always ample opportunity to deliberate, before he gives the Challenge. This opportunity, also, it is reasonably supposed, he extends as far as he pleases; both because the case is of the utmost importance to himself, and because he manages it according to his own choice. To him it is entirely optional, whether he will fight at all; and, when he has determined this point, at what time he shall give the challenge. Whatever time, therefore, he chooses to take for consideration, he actually takes; and this he himself will not deny to be a sufficient time. During this period also, the subject, being of the highest importance, and necessarily making the strongest impressions, must be often, if not always, in his mind; must therefore be viewed in its various lights; and must receive all the examination which such a mind is capable of giving to subjects of the highest consequence. Of course, a duel is invariably the result, if it be not the Challenger's own fault, of the most ample deliberation. It must be his own fault also, if this deliberation be not cool and thorough. All these observations, it is to be remembered, are applicable, with the same force, to the person challenged.

Duelling is, probably, always perpetrated with a spirit of Revenge.

I say *probably always*. For that this is usually the fact, no sober man can doubt for a moment. To me it seems inconceivable, that any man, whatever may have been his feelings in the earlier parts of this transaction, should go into the field and employ himself in the several measures, adopted by duellists for the purpose of taking away each other's lives; and not be under the influence of predominating passions. These passions can be no other than Hatred and Revenge. If we trace this subject with even a moderate degree of attention, from its commencement to its close; it will, I think, be impossible for us to adopt any other opinion. The Challenger receives, or at least believes himself to have received, an injury, (of what kind is a matter of perfect indifference) sufficiently great to demand of him the exposure of his own life to probable destruction; and the death, so far as he is able to compass it, of the injurer. Now let me ask, and let every sober man answer the question, whether an injury, felt to be of this magnitude, was ever regarded, or can possibly be regarded, by such men, as duellists always are, without strong feelings of wrath and revenge? Duellists, every one knows, are men pre-eminently

proud, haughty, insolent, and proverbially irritable; jealous to an extreme of what they call their own rights; disdaining to have them determined, as those of other men are, by tribunals of justice. They regard the forgiveness of injuries, and all the peaceful and gentle virtues of man, with supreme contempt; and claim to themselves, in opposition to the laws of God and their country, the adjudication of their own disputes, and the retribution of their own injuries. What should hinder a man of this character from indulging, or executing, revenge in any case: especially in a case of this importance? The rectitude of revenge is a prime principle of his creed: a principle, to which he adheres with such tenacity, and uniformity, as in a better cause, would do honour to the most exemplary Christian. He does not come to the consideration of this subject with doubts concerning the rectitude, or a conviction of the sinfulness, of revenge; but with a determination, long since established, and never called in question, that it is right: a determination, to which he gives the extensive and commanding influence of a Maxim. From the indulgence, and the execution, of revenge, he is restrained, therefore, by no moral consideration whatever. On the contrary, it is sanctioned by the very first principles of his Morality. Of course, it becomes his boast; and is regarded by him as a part of his moral worth; as the ornament, and glory, of his character. It is evident, then, that there is nothing to hinder him from the indulgence of this passion in any case; especially in a case, to which he attaches this high importance.

Should it be said, that the injury in question is not considered as being of such magnitude; but that the laws, prescribed by duellists to themselves, compel a man of honour to resent injuries, which they themselves esteem small, in this manner: I answer; that the injury, how insignificant soever it may be in reality, is still such in the estimation of duellists, as to subject the challenger, unavoidably, to this exposure, and to all the evils, by which it is followed. In this view only it is regarded by him; and all the resentment, all the feelings of revenge, naturally flowing from an injury of this magnitude, will be awakened in his breast.

In the mind of the Challenged the same emotions will be roused, of course, by the challenge itself. The challenge, in his view, infers the same obligation on his part to expose his own life; and either to lose it, or destroy that of his antagonist. Against his antagonist, therefore, all that hostility will be excited in his mind, which is the natural result of such an injury. Now, let me ask any man of common candour, whether it is credible, that in two men, thus circumstanced, strong feelings of revenge will not of course be kindled? They are men, not only wrathful and revengeful in their nature, but glorying in the indulgence of wrath and revenge. They openly declare the exercise of these passions, in this extreme manner, to be right, honourable to themselves, and ornamental to the human character. For this very exercise of

these passions they esteem themselves superior to other men; style themselves "*brave*," "*men of honour*," and "*gentlemen*;" and name others "*cowards*," "*scoundrels*," and "*rascals*." Is it possible, that, habitually entertaining these opinions, and habitually indulging these passions, they should not exercise them, peculiarly, on such an occasion?

I well know, that duellists profess themselves to be free from these passions in cases of this kind; and declare, that they proceed to these horrible rencounters with entire coolness and good nature. These professions, however, have not the most distant claim to credit. All men, who feel themselves exposed to the censures of mankind, endeavour to rebut them in the best manner in their power. Fair professions are the most obvious means of rebutting them. In the same manner the bully conceals his cowardice, and the hypocrite his irreligion; and both have as good claims to be believed, as the duellist. Cool, indeed, he may be in some instances; that is, not agitated by fear: but every thing in his situation, and in his conduct, proves, that he is angry, and revengeful.

6. *Duellists take the utmost pains to prepare themselves for this dreadful employment.*

In places, where duelling is generally practised, it has become a regular employment; and may be fairly considered as a branch of the regular education of children and youths, to acquire skill and adroitness in the art of destroying human life by this species of violence. Children, at a very early period, employ themselves daily, and yearly, through long periods of time, in shooting with pistols; and acquire skill by this practice, just as penmanship is acquired; with as much coolness, and with as much success. Men also, who have not received this education in early life, employ the sober years of maturer age in learning the same horrid art. To excel in it, is regarded by the adept himself, and his fellows, as an attainment of high distinction. To be able to split a ball upon the edge of a knife, or extinguish a candle, with a pistol ball, at the distance of the utmost goal of duelling, is, in the view of these men, to have arrived at glory, not a little resembling that of *Turenne*, or *Marlborough*.

In all this conduct is seen, with the slightest glance, a deliberate design, a cold-blooded system, of taking away the life of man with the hand of violence: a design, a system, begun in childhood, and cherished, cultivated, and perfected, through every succeeding period. What dupe of credulity can be so absolutely blind to the whole nature of evidence, as not to see, in this conduct, designs equally hostile against human life, more deliberate, and certainly not less guilty, than those of the *professed assassin*?

7. *The Duellist takes away the life of his neighbour without a Cause.*

In this respect, the murderer in the appropriate sense, nay, the professed assassin, can, in many instances at least, more speciously justify himself, than the duellist. The murderer attacks his victim under the domination of furious passion; at the moment, when he has lost the possession of reason, and conscience, and the consequent government of himself; under the consciousness of a real and intense injury; or with the hope of delivering himself from a persecutor. *Brutus* expected to free his country from a Tyrant: *Charlotte Corde*, to deliver hers from another. These, I acknowledge, are far from being solid or justifying reasons; yet they are specious. They are such, as, in the moment of provocation and bitterness, would have great weight, and go far, in the frenetic mind of a man violently in a passion, towards vindicating him to himself. But the duellist is roused to battle by a *contemptuous look*, a *slight word*, or some other wound, given to mere pride. All these and the like things are perfectly harmless, if passed by with serenity and self-possession. At the worst, they are mere expressions of the opinion, which the provoking person entertains of our character; an opinion, which, if we are faithful to ourselves, can do us no harm; and which usually merits nothing but disregard, contempt, or pity. This the duellist has ample time to investigate, and to know: for the very manner of executing his resentment postpones the execution beyond the ordinary period of violent passion. Every duellist must confess, unless he will acknowledge his whole life to be a paroxysm of rage, that the seasons, in which he acquires the skill of directing surely the weapons of death; in which he determines to become a professed duellist; in which he settles the principles, and learns the rules of his profession; in which he fixes in his mind the proper causes of a challenge, the proper motives for fighting, and the proper modes of conducting it; are not seasons of violence and provocation. He will confess that the time of his future life, independently of the little periods of actual combat, which he spends in avowedly professing his deliberate intention of acting as a duellist on every occasion, which he thinks a proper one, is not a time of agitation, wrath, and partial insanity.

Nor is the duellist more happy with respect *to the Final Cause of his conduct*, or the End, which he expects to accomplish by this species of controversy.

Reparation for an injury received is commonly alleged as this end. But the death of his Antagonist furnishes no such reparation. His neighbour's loss of life lessens in no manner, nor degree, any injury, which he has received from him; and cannot possibly restore to him lost property, or lost reputation. The fact, that he has challenged, and killed, a man, will make him neither richer, nor more honourable, nor more happy. He may, indeed, acquire honour in the opinion of a few men, as foolish, unprincipled, and abandoned, as himself. But the good opinion of these men

is disgrace. In the view of every wise and good man he renders himself deeply shameful, and supremely guilty. He may, perhaps, enjoy what men of furious passions sometimes call happiness; viz. the fell pleasure, found by such men in revenge. That revenge is sweet to the taste of a bad man, I am not disposed to question. But it is bitter and dreadful in the end. Let the duellist remember, that God hath said, *To me belongeth vengeance and recompense;* that He has forbidden us *to avenge ourselves;* or to *bear any grudge against our neighbour;* subjoining this solemn and authoritative reason, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay it.* Let him read, and ponder, the parable of *the Servant, who owed ten thousand talents;* and when he finds that servant *thrust into prison* and *delivered over to the tormentors,* as his final and irrevocable doom; let him ask himself, What will become of *him,* who, instead of imprisoning his fellow-servant, puts him to a violent death, and sends him into eternity, with all his sins upon his head? Then let him further ask, whether the pleasure of revenge is sufficiently great to balance the immense hazard, which he incurs for the sake of this gratification?

In the mean time, *a duel, allowing that it should terminate in the death of him who gave the provocation, alters not, in the least, the state of the supposed injury; nor of him who received it.* If he has been charged with cowardice, and is really a coward; he will still remain so. If he is not; the charge will not make him a coward. If he has been charged with lying, and has really lied; he will still remain a liar; unless he becomes an honest man by repentance and reformation. If he has not lied; the charge can never seriously affect his reputation, nor persuade a single sober man to believe him a liar. Men, in this country at least, have usually little to fear from such charges as these. If they will be faithful to themselves; if they will exhibit the virtues, which are denied to them, on all such occasions, as call them into exercise, and renounce, or avoid, the opposite vices; the world, bad as it is, will almost always discern their true character; and will most generally do justice to it. Sometimes, I acknowledge, they may, even while they exercise a good degree of patience, smart under the lash of unmerited censure. These seasons, however, can rarely be of long continuance: and, while they last, will, to a wise man, in most cases, be eminently profitable, by teaching him to moderate the inordinate attachment, so commonly, so foolishly, and so dangerously indulged, to the applause of mankind. This is one, and in my view the chief, exercise of that *love to the world,* which the Scriptures declare to be incompatible with *love to God.* The effectual mortification of this attachment, strange as it may seem to the duellist, would yield him more serene, unmingled, and enduring pleasure, than all that, which has been found in all the gratifications, furnished by duelling since the beginning of time. Let the duellist also remember, that in this very act of attempting

to destroy his neighbour's life, he more grossly injures his own character, than ten thousand charges, such as those, which he thus furiously resents, could possibly do. In the view of every man of sober reflection, he brands upon his character the stamp of murder, the blackest mark of infamy which can be worn by man.

But it will be replied to these observations by the duellist, that *the anguish, which he suffers, is such, as he cannot possibly bear; and that there is no way, in which he can render life even supportable under such an imputation on his character, without taking the life of the slanderer.* This plea has been often seriously made. I will therefore examine it.

In the First Place, *The allegation, contained in it, is untrue.* The anguish, complained of, might be easily supported, without the death of its Author. There are no words, which more frequently delude those, who use them, than *can* and *cannot*, *possible* and *impossible*. We often say, and believe, that *we cannot do that, which we merely will not;* and frequently pronounce that conduct to be *impossible*, which is only *very disagreeable*. The Apostles, and the Christian Martyrs of every age, were, in many instances, possessed of as much understanding and sensibility, and therefore understood the nature of the injuries, which they received, as well, at least, as the duellist in question; and felt them as deeply. Yet they bore slanders more gross, more frequently repeated, more extensively believed, and continued through a much longer duration. They bore them, also, without repining, often without complaining, and always without sinking. Women, also, of extreme delicacy, and exquisite sensibility, have sustained, not with patience only, but with fortitude also, the most brutal accusations. Certainly a man, who boasts so much of his firmness of character, as a duellist always does, must be ashamed of possessing less hardihood, than women and Christians.

Secondly. *This anguish, chiefly, is voluntarily created by himself.* It is nothing but the pain of wounded pride: a passion more injurious to his peace, and more hostile to his moral character, than the slander, which he feels so deeply: a passion, which, if he were a wise and good man, he would use every hopeful exertion to mortify and subdue. Independently of the feelings, occasioned by this passion, the slander, of which he complains, would do him very little harm.

But he has been called a coward. So have thousands and millions of others, who regarded the imputation only with sport. But he has been called a liar. So have vast numbers of the best men who have ever lived; who, though not insensible of the slander, have nevertheless passed quietly on through life in much the same manner as if it had never been uttered. Were the duellist possessed of the same spirit; he would feel as little anguish

from this source as they felt. The whole difference between him and them, is created, both foolishly and sinfully, by his own pride.

Thirdly. *The murderer, in the appropriate sense, can usually make the same plea in his own behalf; and with more force.* It cannot be doubted, that in the hour of extreme provocation and abuse; such abuse, as awakens, for the first time, the dreadful purpose of murder; an agitation must be felt, and an anguish suffered, far more intense, than that, which is ordinarily experienced by the duellist. He has made it a part of his general system, and a deliberate purpose, to destroy human life. To a mind, thus prepared, no event of this nature can come wholly unlooked for; or be, as in the other case, a matter of mere and absolute surprise. A mind, thus circumstanced, can hardly suffer, in the same degree, from the very same provocation. But the provocations, usually given to the duellist, are injuries far inferior, in their degree, to those, which ordinarily excite in the human breast a purpose, so new to it, and so horrible, as murder. The Duellist has been disciplined to this object; and comes to it with the cool feelings of a veteran. The murderer is a raw adventurer, who has never seen this terrible object in a near view before. He is, therefore, urged to the conflict by extreme provocatives only; with intense agitation; and with an impelling anguish, sufficiently great to overcome his dread and horror.

Fourthly. *The laws of the land provide, in the mean time, a reasonable reparation for all those injuries, which the wisdom of Legislators has thought it proper, or been able, to redress; and at least as ample reparation for him, as for his fellow-citizens.* With this reparation he is bound to be contented, until the Legislature shall provide further redress. If he has a right to adjudicate his own cause, and redress his own injuries; every other citizen has the same right. But if this pretended right were to be universally exercised, government would be at an end. Anarchy, the real box of *Pandora*, would empty all its miseries upon mankind; and the nation be converted into a band of murderers. He, who, in this plainest of all cases, will not *submit to the ordinances of man for the Lord's sake*, will certainly receive the *condemnation*, which he has threatened.

Fifthly. *There are innumerable other cases, in which greater injuries are done to mankind, than those which are done to the duellist, and in their nature far more distressing.* Those who have suffered them, have therefore, according to this argument, a right to relieve themselves of their distress, by taking away the lives of those who have occasioned it. My neighbour, for example, has ejected me from my farm by an injurious lawsuit; and left me and my family beggars. He has accused me, as a merchant, of negligence, fraud, or bankruptcy; and by bringing my creditors suddenly upon me, has not only stripped me of my property, but precluded me from acquiring any more. He has negligently brought the

small-pox into my family; and has thus produced the death of my child. He has impeached my Christian character; and has thus procured my excommunication from the Church of Christ. All these injuries are incomparably greater than those, which usually occasion duels. But who, that has any conscience, or any common sense, will say, that I am warranted, for any, or all, of them, to put my neighbour to death? Who does not see, that were these and other injuries, of a similar nature, to be retributed in this manner, a nation would be converted into banditti, and their country into a field of blood?

8. *The Duellist acts against the most powerful and persuasive reasons; unanswerably obliging him to abstain from this guilty conduct.*

In the first place, *He most wickedly exposes his own life to destruction.* On this subject I shall not dwell at present, because I expect to consider the subject of *suicide* in the succeeding discourse.

Secondly. *He wickedly deserts the duties, which he owes to his family and friends.* If he has *parents;* he owes them reverence; gratitude; strong affection; filial care in sickness, and old age, support if they need it; and the innumerable consolations, which that evil day so affectingly demands, and which none but a child is either able or willing to give. Particularly, he owes them that exquisite enjoyment, which is found in the affectionate, virtuous, and amiable, conduct of our beloved offspring. If he has *a Wife;* he owes her all that provision for her wants, and for her comfort; the consolations in sickness, and in sorrow; the kindness and tenderness; the faithful and affectionate attention to her happiness; which he has engaged in the marriage covenant: a covenant, involving, substantially, the same obligations with those of an oath. If he has *Children;* he owes them sustenance, education in knowledge, business, and religion; his instructions, and his government; his example, and his prayers. But all these duties, required by the Infinite Authority of God, and in the two last cases voluntarily assumed also by himself, he basely deserts; and, by entering the field of slaughter, cuts *them* off from the possibility of receiving, and *himself* from the power of performing, them. At the same time, he leaves them all buried, through life, in the hopeless agonies of remembering, and feeling, that he voluntarily went *as an ox to the slaughter; died as a fool dieth;* and in the combined perpetration of Suicide and Murder, entered, without a prayer, and without a hope of forgiveness, into the presence of his Judge.

But should he, (a thing which he has no right to expect) survive the conflict; he survives only to present to his Parents a son, to his wife a husband, and to his children a father, blackened with the guilt of cold, deliberate, murder. In the mean time, he has tempted his neighbour to the same enormous sin; and

entailed upon *his* family and friends, also, the same tremendous evils.

Thirdly. *He does incalculable and irreparable injuries to his Country.* He weakens the Government of his country by practically adopting a principle, which, if right in *him*, would be equally right in *all others;* and which, if adopted by *them*, would destroy social order in a moment: viz. *that an individual is to be his own Judge in his own cause.* He injures his country, also, by robbing it of the services and life of one of its members; in all probability, more important, as the case may be, and has been, to its safety and welfare, than those of millions, like himself. Finally, he injures his country boundlessly, as well as irreparably, in contributing by his opinions, and example, to authorize, extend, and perpetuate, the same baleful iniquity in his fellow-men.

REMARKS.

1. *The observations, made in this Discourse, present to us one of the strongest examples of human depravity.*

Life, to man, is his all. On it every thing is suspended, which man can call his own: his enjoyments, his hopes, his usefulness, and his salvation. Our own life is to us, therefore, invaluable. As we are most reasonably required to *love our neighbour as ourselves; his* life ought, in our estimation, to possess the same value. In conformity to these views, mankind have universally regarded those who have violently deprived others of life, with supreme abhorrence, and branded their names with singular infamy. Murderers have been punished, in every age and country, with the most awful expressions of detestation, with the most formidable array of terror, and with the most excruciating means of agony. On the heads of murderers, at the same time, mankind have heaped curses without bounds. The city of Refuge; nay, the Altar itself, a strong tower of defence to every other criminal; has lost its hallowed character, at the approach of a murderer; and emptied him out of its sacred recesses into the hands of the *Avenger of blood.* God hath said, *A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person, he shall flee to the pit: let no man stay him.* In solemn response, the world has cried, *Amen.*

But all these sentiments, all these rights, all the obligations of this law, the Duellist has violated. Nay, he has violated them in cold blood; with the deliberation of system; in the season of serenity; in the tranquillity of the closet. This violation he has made a part of his creed, and settled purpose of his life; a governing rule of his conduct. All this he has done amid the various advantages of birth and education; under the light of Science; with the Bible in his hand; and before the altar of his God. He has done it all, also, in the face of arguments, which have commanded the conviction of all mankind, except himself; and which would have convinced *him,* had his mind been honestly open to

the force of argument. His opinions have been a thousand times exposed: his arguments have been a thousand times refuted. Against him have been arrayed, in every Christian country, the common sense of mankind, the feelings of humanity, the solemn voice of Law, and the Infinitely awful command of the Eternal God. With a moral hardihood, not often exampled even in this world, he encounters them all; overcomes them all; and goes coolly onward to the work of destruction: as coolly, as if he were only performing a duty. How sinful must that heart be, which can act in this manner!

2. *The Government of every country is bound, indispensably, to punish Duelling with exemplary severity; and, wherever death has been the consequence, with death.*

From the observations which have been made in this discourse, it is clear, that few cases of murder occur among mankind, equally atrocious, or equally deserving of death, with that, which is committed in a duel. Every thing, pertaining to this subject, also, tends towards this issue, as regular and uniform means towards their proper ends. The crime being as gross and heinous, as murder in other cases; deserves the same punishment. It is, also, far more dangerous to a community, than murder in the customary acceptation. The persons, whom Duelling especially threatens, are, in many instances, persons of distinction; formidable obstacles to the ambition of Duellists; persons, who by their influence and talents would naturally become important instruments of the Public good; persons, against whom the vulgar assassin rarely aims the stroke of his dagger. At the same time, the ravages of Duelling are far more widely extended; and the number of its victims is of course far more multiplied.

The manner, in which God has judged concerning this subject, is awfully displayed in the following passage: *If a man smite any person with an instrument of iron, so that he die; he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. And if he smite him with throwing a stone wherewith he may die, and he die; he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. Or if he smite him with an hand-weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die; he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer; when he meeteth him, he shall slay him. And if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by lying of wait, that he die; or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die; he that smote him shall surely be put to death: for he is a murderer. The Revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him. Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person, to cause him to die. Moreover, ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death. And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to*

the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the high priest. So ye shall not pollute the land, wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land; and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood, that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not, therefore, the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I, JEHOVAH, *dwell among the children of Israel.*

SERMON CXVII.

SIXTH COMMANDMENT.—SUICIDE.

EXODUS XX. 13.—*Thou shalt not kill.*

THE next violation of this Command, which I shall have occasion to consider, is *Suicide*, or *Self-Murder*. In examining this subject I shall,

I. *Consider the principal arguments, urged in Justification of Suicide*: and,

II. *Shall allege several Proofs of its Criminality.*

Before I proceed to the consideration of the arguments, which have been supposed to justify Suicide, it will be necessary to observe, that there are two, totally distinct classes of mankind, by which this crime is committed: those who are labouring under the disease of melancholy, or that of derangement; and those, who act, in the same manner, in the full possession of their faculties. In the former of these classes the mental powers are so much disordered, as greatly to change, if not absolutely to annihilate, the criminality. The latter are guilty of this crime, in the same sense as of any other. To the former class, it is obvious, arguments on this or any other topic can be of no use; if addressed to them while under the influence of these infirmities. An habitual conviction of the turpitude of this crime, established in their minds, when possessed of their full strength and soundness, may, indeed, and not improbably, so far influence them, as to prevent this terrible catastrophe. In their diseased state, such of them, as have fallen under my observation, have been incapable of being controlled by the force of argument. The observations, which I shall make concerning this subject, will, therefore, be directed to those of the latter class: to men, who, in the full possession of their reason, from sudden passion, from disappointment in the pursuit of some darling object; such as Fame, Power, Wealth, or Pleasure; the loss of some important enjoyment; the sufferance of some severe disgrace; or the dread of some expected evil, put an end to their lives. These men, though acting thus irrationally under the pressure of violent feeling, may yet be reasoned with in their cooler moments. In these moments a conviction may, perhaps, be wrought, and principles established in their minds, which may control the distempered thoughts, and prevent the dangerous decisions, too naturally springing up in seasons of violent agitation.

The general doctrine, insisted on by *Mr. Hume*, the only writer whom I shall attempt to answer, or whom I consider as having any claim to answer, on this subject, is, *that man has a right to dispose of his own life.* This he asserts in various forms of expression; all of them contributing to show, that he considered this right, as to be exercised according to the pleasure of the individual. Indeed, if such a right exists; the exercise of it cannot be limited in any other manner; unless the limitation be directly expressed by Him, who alone can give, or limit, the right. But no such limitation has been expressed by Him. In the Scriptures this is not even alluded to; and, whatever proof the Light of Nature may furnish, that God has given us this right, there cannot be a pretence, that it discovers to us any such limitation. The right itself, therefore, is to be exercised according to every man's judgment; or, what will in this case be exactly the same, according to every man's pleasure.

But where is the proof, that God has given this right to mankind? The arguments, which *Mr. Hume* adduces to this purpose, are chiefly the following.

1. *That we were created for the end of effectuating our own enjoyment in the present life.* "Men," he says, "are intrusted to their own judgment and discretion, and may employ every faculty, with which they are endowed, to provide for their ease, happiness, or preservation."

In a former discourse I have explained the end, for which man was made; and have, I trust, satisfactorily proved, that *man was created to glorify his Maker by knowing, reverencing, loving, serving, and enjoying, him for ever.* The accomplishment of this end in the Creation of Man I have, unless I have been deceived, shown to be in the highest degree honourable to God, and in the highest degree productive of happiness to man. That this end, whether the real end, for which man was created, or not, is incomparably nobler, better, and more worthy of God, than the end proposed by *Mr. Hume*, which is no other than *the enjoyment of the pleasures of sense in this world*, cannot be denied. No more can it be denied, that of the ends, which were capable of being answered by the creation of man, God selected that, which was noblest, best, and most worthy of His character; unless it be also denied, not only that He is Infinitely Wise and Good, but that He is Wise and Good at all. As, therefore, there are ends, for which man might be created, nobler, and better, than that alleged by *Mr. Hume;* as one, Infinitely nobler, and better, has been pointed out; it is certain, that that, proposed by him, is not the true end of the creation of man.

Besides; the enjoyment of this pleasure in the manner, exhibited by *Mr. Hume* himself, is inconsistent with the existence of virtue in man; and much more with the existence of perfect virtue. But to be virtuous is to render more honour to our Creator, to be

more conformed to His pleasure, and to enjoy more happiness, than is possible, if we are destitute of virtue. To be perfectly virtuous is to render the highest honour to our Creator; to be perfectly conformed to his pleasure; and to be perfectly happy. If, then, God regarded either Himself, or us; He did not propose, as the end of creating man, the enjoyment of the happiness, mentioned by *Mr. Hume.*

2. *Mr. Hume alleges, as another argument for this right, the Insignificance of human life.* "In the sight of God," he says, "every event is alike important: and the life of a man is of no greater importance to the Universe, than that of an oyster."

Our Saviour informs us, on the contrary, that *men are of more value in the sight of God than many sparrows.* Common sense irresistibly subscribes to the truth of this declaration. It is impossible to believe the contrary declaration. God unquestionably sees things as they are. But, as unquestionably, a mind, possessed of the powers of thought, volition, and motivity; a mind, capable of knowing, and in many instances actually knowing, loving, serving, and glorifying, its Creator; a mind, which can originate, and diffuse, important good to its fellow-creatures; a mind, formed for Immortal being, and destined to an endless improvement in knowledge, virtue, and enjoyment; is certainly of more value than many oysters. All this, however, depends on the life of man. The life of man, therefore, is of more value than that of an oyster. Were it not; parents, so far as the light of nature teaches us, might, in agreement with the doctrine of *Diogenes*, and other Cynics, lawfully roast, and eat, their children; as lawfully, as they may now roast, and eat, oysters. A man of common sense would hardly be persuaded, that *Moses*, *Paul*, *Louis the Good*, *the two Gustavuses*, *Alfred the Great*, and *Washington*, were of no more importance to the Universe, than oysters. With a view, probably, to strengthen this allegation, *Mr. Hume* asks, "*Where is the crime of turning a few ounces of blood out of their channel?*" By this question he undoubtedly intends, that his readers shall suppose Suicide to be nothing more, than merely diverting the course of a few ounces of blood. If *Mr. Hume* believed this; he deserved very little of that reputation, which he has acquired for understanding. If he did not believe it; the question does very little honour to his candour, or sincerity. It is no crime to turn a few ounces of blood out of the channel. Often it is a duty; because it is the means of preserving, or restoring, health. Many ounces of blood may be thus diverted from their course; and life be not only continued, but invigorated, and prolonged. In this case, the sphere of man's usefulness, and duty, and comfort, may in this world be enlarged; and his happiness in the world to come secured, and increased. But the destruction of human life, by whatever means it is accomplished, terminates usefulness, duty, and comfort, in the present world; and, if voluntarily accomplished,

prevents the existence of happiness in the world to come. The difference between these things, as intended by *Mr. Hume*, is of course infinite. The phraseology, which appropriately expresses the one, cannot, therefore, be employed, consistently with propriety, nor with even vulgar honesty, to denote the other.

3. *The same writer argues this right from the Smallness of the Objects, and Accidents, by which the life of man is frequently destroyed without his concurrence.* "A hair," he says, "a fly, an insect, is able to destroy this mighty being, whose life is of such importance. Is it an absurdity then," he asks, "to suppose, that human prudence may lawfully dispose of what depends on such insignificant causes?"

To this question the reply is easy, and complete.

The destruction of human life by a fly, an insect, or a hair, is accomplished, as every man perfectly well knows, and as every man habitually says, by the immediate Providence of God. In the case of *Suicide*, it is destroyed by the will of man himself. God, who gave life, has an unquestionable right to take it away. It is yet to be proved, that man, who has only received it from God, has a right to destroy it without the known permission of its Author.

4. *This assertion is, however, denied by Mr. Hume; and he directly declares, that Suicide is as absolutely the work of God, as any of those events, specified under the preceding head.* "When I fall upon my own sword;" he says, "I receive my death equally from the hands of the Deity, as if it had proceeded from a lion, a precipice, or a fever."

Mr. Hume does not, *in this Essay*, any where, in form, discuss the question, Whether man is a moral agent, in such a sense, as to be accountable for his actions, and to be deserving of praise or blame, punishment or reward. But it is evident, that he all along proceeds upon the supposition, that man is not such an agent. Of this he has given very numerous, and very plain, indications. A very clear and decisive one is found in the declaration, which I am now considering. If man is not such an agent; all the observations in this Essay might have been spared. For, plainly, no action of man could, in this case, be of a criminal, because, it could not be of a moral, nature. In this case, it would be equally just to censure a post, or a wall, for falling upon a man, and killing him, as to censure an assassin, for producing the same catastrophe by an act of murder. If a man be not such an agent; all inquiries concerning the moral nature of his actions are nugatory; because they are unmeaning. *Mr. Hume*, particularly, ought never to have written the numerous things, which he has so strenuously urged concerning right and wrong, in the different parts of his Works. Neither rectitude, nor its opposite, are predicable of *brutes*. Why? Because they are not moral agents. If *men* are not moral agents; neither would these attributes be any more pre-

dicable of *them*. But if men are moral agents; then those, which are called human actions, are not in any such sense the acts of God, as to prevent men from being accountable for them, or to prevent them from being truly commendable, and rewardable, for one class of such actions, and blameworthy, and punishable, for the opposite. All nations, in all ages, have accordingly censured, and punished, such as were guilty of one class of these actions, and praised, and rewarded, such as performed the other. On this foundation rests all human intercourse, and all human discipline. The child is punished at home, and at school; because he is considered as having done that which is wrong; and rewarded in both, because he is considered as having done that which is right. On the same grounds men are disesteemed, hated, censured, and punished even with death; or approved, loved, applauded, and have their merit acknowledged by the most ample reward. As this has been the universal conduct of men from the beginning; it is a clear and full testimony of the views, entertained by the human mind concerning this subject. It is further to be observed, that men cannot act in any other manner. The admission of the doctrine, that mankind are not such agents, would ruin the world. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that, although many persons have thought proper to assert this doctrine, not an individual among them has ever been found, who acted in conformity to it: not one, who did not as bitterly complain of what he called wrongs, or vindicate as strenuously what he called his rights, as his fellow-men. But, should we admit this argument, it will prove more, than either we, or even *Mr. Hume*, may be aware of; at least, more than he intended. If men are not moral agents; if their voluntary actions are merely the acts of God; then it will follow, that equally with Suicide, their frauds, lies, oppressions, and murders, are acts of God. Should a swindler cheat *Mr. Hume* out of his estate; or an assassin plunge a poniard into his bosom; it would, I think, be a very odd, a very unsatisfactory, consolation to him, to be told by the villain, that he ought to be perfectly contented with the villainy, since it was only an act of his Creator.

5. *Another argument, alleged by Mr. Hume for the right in question, is, that Suicide does not disturb the Order of the Universe.* "There is no being," he says, "which by ever so irregular an action can encroach upon the plan of the Creator's Providence, or disorder the Universe."

If *Mr. Hume* intended by this declaration, that God rules all things with such an universal and absolute dominion, as that *none can stay His Hand, nor any* being lawfully *say unto Him, What doest Thou?* as that he will bring "good out of the evil, and order out of the confusion," occasioned by sin; he has undoubtedly declared, here, a truth of high importance. Unfortunately for him, however, this truth will contribute nothing to the support of

his cause. No being can, indeed, resist the hand of God. But every sinner wishes to resist it; and in this wish becomes guilty, hateful, and deserving of punishment.

In this declaration, and many others, contained in the same Treatise, the Author studiously avoids mentioning, what he ought every where to have strongly insisted on, *the broad, and obvious, distinction between the Providential, and the Preceptive, Will of God.* It is unquestionably a part of the Providential Will of God, to permit, for reasons, (inscrutable by us, at least in most instances, but undoubtedly sufficient in themselves) the existence of sinful actions. But it is no part of his Preceptive Will, either to require, or to allow, them. His preceptive Will, or in other words the Moral Law, requires of all Intelligent beings perfect holiness: a disposition, perfectly loving what He loves, and hating what He hates. So evident is this truth, that all nations, not absolutely sunk in ignorance, have discerned it, to a considerable extent, by the mere light of nature. The *Savages* of *the Western Wilderness* have acknowledged, equally with the *Greeks* and *Romans*, that Reverence and Gratitude were due to their Gods; and that *they* required of men justice, truth, and kindness, to their fellow-men. *Mr. Hume* himself would not dare to say, that God does not love these things; nor that he does not require them of his creatures, any more than He loves, and requires, impiety, ingratitude, injustice, falsehood, and cruelty. He would not say, that God at all loves, or requires, the things last mentioned. Loose as his apprehensions concerning Religion and Morality were, he would not say, that God does not hate the crimes, which I have specified; nor that He has not forbidden them to mankind. He would not say, that these crimes are equally agreeable to the will of God, equally pleasing to Him as actions of his Intelligent Creatures, with the virtues, mentioned above.

But all this he must say, in order to make this allegation an argument to his purpose.

If no action of any being can be so irregular, as to be opposed to the Preceptive Will of God; then it will follow, that impiety, ingratitude, profaneness, atheism, fraud, lying, oppression, injustice, adultery, rape, and murder, are equally agreeable to the Creator with impiety, justice, truth, benevolence, purity, and mercy. Then it will follow also, that God is wholly indifferent to all these objects; and that all, which is meant by right and wrong, holds exactly the same place in His estimation, and pleasure. In other words, it will follow, that the Creator of the Universe is wholly regardless of the moral character and conduct of His creatures.

6. *Mr. Hume insists, that Suicide does no harm to Society; or, at the least, that, as by cutting off his life in this manner he only ceases to do good, he does the least supposable harm to Society.*

To this I answer, that if he has *friends;* he compels them to lament his death, with views peculiarly distressing by their perplexity, and with feelings of agony and despair. Perhaps no object, unless the person, who is cut off in the unrepented guilt of murdering another, is regarded with more painful emotions, than a beloved friend, who has voluntarily terminated his own life. The minds of those, whom he leaves behind him, sink under the remembrance of what he has done in this world, and tremble to follow him to another. Keen indeed must be the edge of that distress, which finds its only consolation, and its only hope, in the doubting belief, perhaps in the faint conjecture, that the friend, whom it deplores, was hurried out of life by the impulse of delirium.

If the Suicide had *a family*, he has robbed them of all that advice, consolation, sympathy, and those kind offices universally, which he owed to *them* in a peculiar manner. All these he has vowed to his *Wife*. God has made it his duty to render them to his *Children*. To both, also, he is bound by the same obligations to furnish support. This, perhaps, he *may* have provided. If he has; he has still robbed his children of that parental instruction, government, habituation, and example, which, together, constitute, in most cases, far the most arduous, the most important, and the most useful, labour of man; and the chief duty, which, ordinarily, he has it in his power ever to perform.

Society at large he robs of one of its members; and of all the duties which that member owed to society.

At the same time, he has presented to all these an Example, which if followed by them, would destroy, at once, the family, the community, and the world. Yet, if he has acted right, it would be equally right for them to follow him. No rule can be formed concerning this subject, but an universal one. *Mr. Hume* has made it such. If his rule be right, then; by merely adhering to rectitude, the present inhabitants of the world may exterminate the race of man in a moment. But,

7. *Mr. Hume, supposing that men would not make use of this right, unless in circumstances of distress, considers This, at least, as a justifying cause for Suicide.*

"Most people," he says, "who lie under any temptation to abandon existence, are in some such situation; that is, in age, or under infirmities; incapable of promoting the interest of Society; a burden to it; or afflicted in some manner or other."

On this subject I observe,

First. *That this situation, whatever it may be, is one, in which God by His Providence has placed the man.* It is, therefore, a situation, of which we cannot reasonably, or lawfully, complain; unless we can lawfully, and reasonably, complain of the Dispensations of God.

Secondly. *It is a situation, in which, if we perform our duty, we may glorify our Maker, by voluntarily fulfilling such designs, as Infinite Wisdom and Goodness has thought proper to accomplish by our instrumentality, and has put it into our power to accomplish.* It may be said, that, *should we put an end to our lives, God will still be glorified.* I grant it. But we shall not be voluntary instruments of his Glory. This is our duty, and our only duty. If this, then, be not done; our whole duty is left undone. If we refuse to do this duty; we refuse to obey the will of our Maker, rebel against His government, and voluntarily oppose his designs. This is sin; and the only sin. What the duties are, to which we are called in cases of affliction, common sense, even without the aid of Revelation, might, one would think, determine with no great difficulty. They are obviously the duties of submission, dependence, patience, and fortitude; prayer for our support, and deliverance; and such efforts for this end; as are consistent with the spirit here specified. By this character, God is as really, and certainly glorified, as by any other, which man can exhibit. It scarcely needs the aid of Revelation to discern, that submission to God must be an acceptable offering to him. But if we put an end to our lives, because we are afflicted; we declare, in the decisive language of action, that we will not, or cannot, bear what God has been pleased to lay upon us. In the former case, we declare, that we will not submit to his dispensations: in the latter, we moreover declare, that the burdens, which he lays upon us, are such, as we cannot, and therefore such as we ought not to endure: of course, that they are oppressive, and unjust.

Thirdly. *The Case is falsely stated by Mr. Hume.*

There is no situation, which is intolerable, except those, by which life is brought to an end without our intervention: and these are incapable of being referred to the case in hand. In every other case, we can sustain our afflictions, if we please. That it is our duty to sustain them, and to sustain them willingly, cannot be denied, unless by him, who also denies, that it is our duty to obey God in any case.

Fourthly. *The position of Mr. Hume, that we are useless to Society, in any situation, in which we can become guilty of Suicide, is also false.*

It will be remembered, that I all along except cases of Melancholy and Delirium. It is however true, that even in these cases no man can know, that he will not, at some future time, be useful to his fellow-men. In every other case, a man, possessed of the power of contriving and executing his own destruction, may be, and can know that he may be, useful to the world. I can think of no case, more favourable to the position of *Mr. Hume*, than that of a person, confined for a long period to his bed; or, as it is commonly termed, *bed-rid.* A man, even in this situation, may, if he

pleases, be extensively useful. The patience, fortitude, and piety, with which he may sustain this trying affliction, may be among the most edifying, and persuasive, proofs of the reality, power, and excellence, of the religion which he professes, and the efficacious means of conversion, and salvation, to multitudes. *Mr. Hume* himself says, that the damnation of one man is an infinitely greater evil, than the subversion of a thousand millions of kingdoms." This evil, the man, who is bed-rid, may prevent with regard to himself, and with regard to others; and may also be the means of accomplishing the contrary inestimable good. It cannot be said, that such a man is useless. [illegible] time, it is a false supposition, that a man can be useless, as he ought, or, in other words, does his duty in any situation which God is pleased to place him. God does nothing [illegible] Still less can it be supposed, that he places an Intelligent being in any situation, in which his obedience to the Divine Will must be useless.

Fifthly. *Neither is it true, that any man is necessarily a burden to Society.*

A vicious man is, I acknowledge, often such a burden. But he is not necessarily vicious. His sloth, prodigality, insincerity, profaneness, falsehood, fraud, cruelty, or whatever vice he may be guilty of, is wholly the result of his own choice. The moment he renounces these evils, he will become not a burden, but a blessing.

A virtuous man may become unable to support himself; may be incurably sick, or hopelessly bereft of his most useful faculties; and in either of these situations may be esteemed a burden to Society by the lazy, the covetous, and the unfeeling. But he will be esteemed such by no virtuous man. He, who remembers, that ministrations of kindness to the *least of Christ's brethren* will be accepted as offerings to himself, will never, unless in some unhappy moment of sloth, or worldliness, think the performance of it burdensome. Christ has informed his disciples, that *the poor they will always have with them.* On *His* part the legacy was not unkind: to *us*, it is obviously a blessing. Nothing more enlarges the heart, refines the affections, or improves the character, than kindness, freely rendered to the afflicted. Nothing more excites a spirit of dependence on God; or awakens gratitude for his blessings to us; or expands the feelings of benevolent sympathy; or endears to us our fellow-men, particularly our fellow-christians; or assimilates our disposition to that of the Redeemer. He to whom, without any fault of his own, mankind are indebted for these benefits, cannot be a burden to Society.

I have now reviewed every argument of Mr. Hume, which, in my opinion, merits an answer: and his arguments, so far as I know, are all, of any importance, which have been hitherto alleged in favour of Suicide. I shall only add one observation to those,

which I have already made under this head. It is this: *All the distresses, almost, which give birth to this wanton destruction of human life, are the mere effects of predominant wickedness in the mind of the Suicide.* Losses at the gaming-table, disappointments of ambition, mortified avarice, wounded pride, and frustrated hopes of sensuality, are usually the immediate sources of this crime. Instead of killing himself for such reasons as these, the true interest of the unhappy man demands of him, with Infinite force, that he should live, repent, and reform.

II. *I shall now allege several Proofs of the Criminality of Suicide, in addition to those, which have been unavoidably specified in answering the arguments of Mr. Hume.* Of these, the

1. *Which I shall mention, is the Text.*

In the first discourse from this passage it was observed, that the command, which it contains, is expressed in the most absolute manner, *Thou shalt not kill;* that to kill is the thing forbidden, and by the words is forbidden in all cases whatever; that the words were chosen by God Himself, and binds us, therefore, with Infinite Authority; and that man cannot lawfully originate an exception, nor in any other manner limit their import. These observations, it is presumed, cannot be denied to be true. But if they are true, the text forbids Suicide in the most absolute manner.

Mr. Hume indeed observes, *that the law of Moses is abolished, except so far as it is established by the Law of Nature.* A Christian will probably be satisfied of the Authority of the *Decalogue*, without this condition; *when he finds it expressly established by Christ.*

2. *In addition to this decisive proof; a proof so decisive, as to need no addition; I observe, that the Suicide hurries himself to the judgment in the commission of a gross crime, of which he cannot repent.* If we should even allow, that the criminality of this act was not capable of being proved, so far as the act itself only is concerned; it cannot be denied, that *he, who commits it, is, in some degree at least, uncertain whether it be lawful, or not.* To abstain from it, he at the same time, knows to be lawful. In this case, to commit Suicide is a gross sin; because the perpetrator refuses to do that, which he knows to be right; and does that, of whose rectitude he has no assurance.

Further. *No person, who thus puts an end to his life, is assured that his salvation, independently of this act, is secured.* Of course, even on the most favourable supposition, he puts his eternity at hazard; and ventures, in an inexcusable and dreadful manner, upon perdition.

Finally. *There are,* to say the least, *strong, and hitherto unanswered, reasons to prove Suicide a crime; and that, of enormous magnitude.*

These reasons will never be answered. It will always be true that there are important ends to be accomplished by every man during the whole period, through which his life would extend, did he not lay violent hands on himself. These ends are constituted, and set before him, by God Himself. In refusing to accomplish them, the Suicide violates the highest obligations, under which he is, or can be placed. He is, according to the supposition, in affliction. This affliction both reason and Revelation declare to be sent by his Creator. It is sent for the very purpose of amending his character; awakening in him patience and submission; faith and fortitude, enabling him to feel his dependence; softening his heart with tenderness towards his fellow-creatures; exciting in him a spirit of universal obedience; and, thus, preparing him for endless life. I need not say, that these designs, on the part of God, are pre-eminently benevolent; nor that in refusing to accomplish them, nor that *in sinning against God*, in this manner, *he* supremely *wrongs his own soul.*

Human life is plainly intended by the Creator to be a mere course of duty and obedience. This is the direct appointment of the Creator. To wish to frustrate, or reverse, this appointment, much more to attempt the frustration, or reversion, of it by overt acts, is sinful of course. How sinful, then, must be this violent attempt to oppose the Divine Will!

But the Suicide cuts himself off from every opportunity, from the very possibility, of repenting of these multiplied crimes. Hurried into eternity by his own hand, he appears before the bar of God, with all his guilt upon his head. Should it be said, that he may secure himself an opportunity of repentance by a gradual death; I answer; that neither the temper of mind with which he destroys his life, nor the views which God cannot but entertain of this violent act of rebellion, furnish him with any hope, that he will become penitent.

3. *The Scriptures expressly forbid us voluntarily to sink under any affliction.*

My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when thou art rebuked of him.

Christ has said to all his disciples, *In the world ye shall have tribulation.* But he has most benevolently subjoined, *In me ye shall have peace:* that is, peace, awakened in the midst of your afflictions, or flowing from them, as a regular consequence of your submission and sanctification. Accordingly *St. Paul* declares that, *Although no affliction is for the present joyous, but all are grievous; yet nevertheless they afterwards yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.*

In these passages we are required, unconditionally, to sustain our afflictions with submission, patience, and fortitude. This command we cannot disobey, even in thought, without sin; much less in so violent an act of opposition. Suicide is the result, not only of a

total want of submission, but of direct and violent hostility against the will of God. It is a declaration, that we will not *endure the chastening of God;* and that the afflictions, with which He is pleased to visit us, are intolerable; and that they are, therefore, unreasonable, and unrighteous specimens of oppression in His administrations. No charge can be more obviously blasphemous, than this; more unsuited to the character of the Creator; or more unbecoming the mouth of a creature.

4. *The Suicide is always bound to prolong his life, by personal Duties, which are indispensable.*

He is bound to secure his own salvation. He is bound to provide for his family. If he performs not these so long as they need them, and so long as it is in his power, *he denies the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* He is bound to train up his children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* He is bound to promote the happiness and salvation of those around him; and, generally, of his fellow-men. Universally, whatever is his situation, he may, if he lives, do good to himself, and to mankind: and this good he is bound to do, so long as God is pleased to spare his life. When he destroys himself; he is guilty of gross rebellion against God in refusing to perform these duties.

5. *The Scriptures never exhibit Suicide as the conduct of any, but very wicked men.*

Job, *David*, *Elijah*, *Jeremiah*, *Daniel*, and *his three Companions; Christ*, *and the Apostles;* underwent afflictions, incomparably more severe than those, for which the Suicide destroys his life. Yet neither of these thought it proper voluntarily to terminate his own life. *Daniel* and his Companions, Christ and his Apostles, were, in most instances, however, destined to a violent and scandalous death: one of the very cases which *Mr. Hume* has selected, to show the lawfulness of suicide. This they perfectly well knew; but not one of them appears to have thought of preventing the pain and disgrace by laying violent hands on himself. This case is plainly an extreme one. None can be more so. Yet the perfect piety of Christ, and the exemplary piety of these virtuous men, instead of dictating this desperate course of conduct to *them*, taught them, severally, to wait with humble resignation for the Will of God, and patiently to receive their destiny from his hand. The example of these persons will be followed by every virtuous man.

Saul, an open rebel against his Maker, and the intentional murderer of *David and Jonathan; Ahithophel*, a traitor to his lawful sovereign; and *Judas*, a traitor to his Redeemer; were Suicides. This conduct in them was the result of their dispositions; the product of such principles, as controlled these abandoned men. It is, therefore, rationally argued, that Suicide, in the view of the Divine Mind, is the moral consequence of the worst principles only. On the contrary, it is equally clear, that Virtue in the

Evangelical Sense is totally incompatible with the perpetration of this act; and absolutely forbids the voluntary destruction of our own lives. He, who meditates the voluntary termination of his own life, ought solemnly to remember, that he is indulging a spirit which is directly opposed to that of Christ, and strongly assimilated to that of *Saul*, *Ahithophel*, and *Judas*.

SERMON CXVIII.

SIXTH COMMANDMENT.—DRUNKENNESS.

EPHESIANS v. 18.—*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.*

IN the preceding discourses I have considered *several methods, in which life is destroyed, in opposition to the Sixth Command of the Decalogue.* In this discourse I shall make some observations concerning *another of these methods;* viz. DRUNKENNESS.

Drunkenness is nearly allied to Suicide. It is equally certain means of shortening life. The principal difference, so far as the termination of life is concerned, lies in the mode. What is appropriately called Suicide, is a *sudden, or immediate, termination of life.* Drunkenness brings it *gradually* to an end. The destruction, in both cases, is equally certain; and not materially different in the degree of turpitude. In many instances, indeed, this catastrophe is brought to pass at least as suddenly by drunkenness, as by Suicide. There is, also, another difference between these crimes. The Suicide intends directly to destroy his life, and makes this his prime purpose. The Drunkard thinks of nothing less. The prime object in his view is the gratification of his relish for strong drink, united with that bewildered elevation of spirits, which he feels in the hour of intoxication.

In the text we are expressly, and universally, forbidden to commit this sin. The penalty, incurred by the commission, is as expressly declared in 1 Cor. vi. 10: where it is said, that *Drunkards shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* This threatening we are not indeed to consider as absolute, any more than others, expressed in a similar manner. Undoubtedly, no person, who enters eternity in the character of a drunkard, will *inherit the kingdom of God.* But I know of no reason to conclude, that he, who though once a drunkard, has become a penitent, will not be accepted.

This interesting subject I design to consider at large under the following heads.

I. *The Nature;*
II. *The Causes;*
III. *The Evils; of Drunkenness;* and,
IV. *The Means; of avoiding it.*

I. *I shall make a few observations concerning the nature of this sin.*

Drunkenness is that singular state of man, in which he loses, either partially, or wholly, the use of his bodily and mental pow-

ers, under the operation of spirituous drink, opium, or other means of intoxication.

Drunkenness is either *occasional*, or *habitual*.

Occasional Drunkenness exists only in irregular, separate, solitary, or even single instances; and is produced sometimes by design, and sometimes by accident.

Habitual Drunkenness is a frequent, and usually a regular, intoxication; occasioned by that increased and peculiar love of strong drink, which is generated by Occasional drunkenness.

Habitual Drunkenness will be the principal subject of this discourse. It will only be necessary to remark concerning Occasional Drunkenness, that all the observations, almost, concerning Habitual Drunkenness, will be applicable to it, although in an inferior degree; and that, wherever the subject shall appear to demand any serious discriminations, I shall endeavour to make them in the progress of the discussion.

II. *The Causes of this Sin*, by which I intend not the immediate, and properly efficient, causes; such as those already mentioned: but those, which, although more remote, are yet deeply concerned in the production of it; are principally *the following*.

1. *Example.*

By this I intend, that we gradually acquire a habit of Drunkenness, by seeing others drink; and, if I may be allowed the expression, catching the practice merely from the fact, that we often witness it in others. Wherever the character of those, who set the example, is the object of particular affection, esteem, or reverence, the influence of the example becomes proportionally great and dangerous. Parents, in this manner, become peculiarly, and other relations and friends generally, powerful means of seduction, and ruin to their children, and other relatives. In this case I suppose nothing but the example, and the veneration, and endearment, by which it is accompanied, to produce the corruption of those, to whom it is exhibited.

2. *Frequenting those places, where strong drink is conveniently obtained.*

A Tavern, especially a vulgar one, or a dram-shop, or an alehouse, newly opened, usually exhibits strongly, as well as clearly, the efficacy of this cause. Each of them soon begins to attract its train of drinking customers; and within a moderate period becomes surrounded by its circle of drunkards. There is scarcely a greater nuisance to society, than houses of this nature; in which spirituous liquors are sold, in small quantities, to the neighbouring inhabitants. Millions of the human race have in these baleful haunts taken the first fatal step towards perdition.

3. *Evil Companions.*

These usually combine all the efficacy of the former causes, with many additional temptations. They present *the example:* they provide *the retreat*, and *the convenience*. At the same time,

they add to these the force of direct and powerful solicitations; the sprightliness of wit; the gayety of sports, and songs; the pungency of ridicule: the influence of good nature, and affection; and the power of that sympathy, which is always found in social festivity. Such a combination is too powerful to be resisted by common minds; perhaps by any mind, which is voluntarily, for any length of time, within its reach. He who frequents the society of jovial companions in an habitual manner, may fairly consider himself as destined, in the end, to become a sot.

4. *Customary and regular drinking.*

Multitudes of persons accustom themselves to take a moderate quantity of strong drink, day by day, at regular periods: in the morning, immediately before dinner, or in the evening. Labouring men, in this country, are, to a great extent, accustomed to use ardent spirits at certain given times of the day; considering them as necessary to recruit their strength, which is supposed to be wasted by their toil. Some of them, less attentive to particular times of drinking, demand stated quantities of strong drink, which they regard as indispensable to enable them to pursue their daily labour. Men of wealth and fashion, with nearly the same regularity, consume large quantities of wine, at, and after, dinner. In these, and in all other cases of regular drinking, an habitual attachment to strong drink is insensibly begun, strengthened, and confirmed. The man, who drinks spirits regularly, ought to consider himself as having already entered the path of habitual intoxication.

5. *Affliction, also, is not unfrequently, a Cause of Drunkenness.*

The affliction, here referred to, is both bodily and mental. Certain diseases of the body, it is well known, bring with them lowness of spirits, discouragement, and melancholy. The patient oftentimes resorts to the use of strong drink, as a remedy for these evils; and finds in it a temporary relief from the pressure. Oftentimes the physician prescribes this remedy in form; and thus adds the sanction of his skill, and character, to the patient's inclination. In every case of this nature, a degree of pain is usually experienced in that part of the stomach, which is sometimes called the "*Second Sensory.*" This is commonly relieved, at least in some degree, by the use of strong drink, taken, at first, in moderate quantities. The remedy, however, leaves the disease worse than it found it. To produce the desired effect, a greater quantity is soon necessary; and then a greater still. In this manner multitudes of persons become Drunkards.

The mental evils, which give birth to this unhappy habit, are numerous. Most, or all, of them, however, are such, as, instead of exciting, waste, or destroy, the energy of the mind. Of this nature are a strong sense of irretrievable disgrace; a painful consciousness of perplexed, or desperate, circumstances; merited loss of esteem and affection, highly valued by ourselves; long-contin-

ued suspense concerning some important interest; final discouragement of ardent wishes, or favourite pursuits; together with several other very anxious, and hopeless, situations of the mind. From the distress, suffered in these and the like cases, it often be takes itself for relief to spirituous liquors. The relief is necessarily transient; and, in order to be enjoyed to any great extent, must, therefore, be often repeated. By this repetition the sufferer soon becomes of course habitually intemperate.

6. *A small number of persons find a Cause of Drunkenness in an original, native appetite for strong drink.*

The number of these is so small, and the Cause itself so little needs explanation, that it is unnecessary to dwell on this part of the subject.

III. *The principal Evils of Drunkenness are the following.*

1. *It exhibits the subject of it in the light of extreme Odiousness, and Degradation.*

Drunkenness always deprives a man, either partially or wholly of his reason; and very often of his bodily faculties. A man without reason is either a maniac, or a brute; and, for the time, presents the eye with a spectacle, more sunk, than the brute, and more painful than the maniac. The loss of Reason is, to man, the loss of all, which renders him either comfortable, respectable, or useful. How painful, how humiliating, is the sight of an Idiot! How excruciating the appearance of a Lunatic! How lowering to human pride and independence, to sober contemplation, and real dignity, a respectable man, transformed by age, or sickness, into a Driveller! Such a transformation the Drunkard accomplishes for himself, during every period of his intoxication; and adds to all the other circumstances of degradation the peculiarly humbling, and hateful one, that he has voluntarily degraded himself.

In this situation the Drunkard becomes, in the literal and most emphatical sense, a fool. His conversation is that of a tongue, vibrating without a mind; moving, because it has been accustomed to move; lisping and babbling an imperfect, cluttered, and dragging articulation: a kind of instinctive effort, resembling that of the Idiot, who, having learned to count the strokes of a Clock, continued to count, after the Clock had ceased to go.

In the mean time, many Drunkards, who partially lose their reason, set their passions on fire. All restraints, in this case, vanish with their reason. The mind becomes a furnace of frenzy; and the bodily powers, stimulated to more than ordinary vigour, are employed only as the instruments of rage and violence. In the former case, the man sunk down to the level of a Swine. In this, he converts himself into a Tiger. In the former case, he became loathsome and despicable, In this, he becomes equally the object of hatred and terror.

There is, however, a stage in the progress of both, at which they lose alike, and absolutely, the powers of both body and mind. Each then becomes absolutely stupid: a mass of flesh, in which a soul once lived, thought, animated, and controlled; but from which it has fled, indignant at the brutal abuse, which it has suffered. It has become palsied, lifeless, and for the period, extinct, under a shock which it was unable to sustain.

2. *Drunkenness exposes the Subject of it to many, and those often extreme, Dangers.*

The Drunkard is always exposed to be overreached, and defrauded, during the seasons of his partial insanity. At these seasons, many persons, devoted to the use of strong drink, are peculiarly inclined to manage business, and make bargains. The weakness, the want of self-control, and the incapacity of forming just estimates of men and things, always visible at these seasons in such men, mark them out as prey for the cheat and the sharper. Accordingly they often take such measures, to produce in them such a degree of intoxication, as they well know will effectually answer their own purposes. Without any such preconcertion, there are, however, always sharpers enough, ready to arrest the Drunkard in his intoxication, and Drunkards enough to furnish them with victims. At almost all such periods, the losses incurred are material, frequently they are great; and sometimes they are fatal.

At other seasons, when the intoxication is complete, the subject of it is exposed to extreme personal dangers. Few men, in this situation, are aware, so long as they retain a partial use of their limbs, and some faint glimmerings of understanding, how incompetent they have become to direct their own conduct with safety. Of course, they venture without apprehension into such situations, as demand the full exercise of their bodily and mental powers. Hence one of them has fallen from his horse; and broken his limbs, or his neck. Another has fallen into the fire; and either terminated his life, or made himself through the remainder of it a miserable cripple. A third has lost himself in a wintry storm; and perished, because he could not find the way to his own house. A fourth has fallen overboard, and been drowned. A fifth has killed himself by swallowing a larger quantity of ardent spirits, than he was aware, or than his nature could sustain. By these, and many other accidents, to some or other of which the Drunkard is almost always exposed, multitudes have come to an untimely end.

Nor is the danger much less to the intoxicated person of doing, without any design, and even in contradiction to his prevailing wishes, serious injuries to those around him. Not a small number of dwelling-houses have been consumed by these undesigning incendiaries. In the conflagration, the inhabitants, whoever they may have been, most frequently his family, and perhaps as frequently the Drunkard himself, have perished. Who that has the

least share of sober reflection, or common sense, left, would not tremble at the first approach towards this terrible catastrophe?

3. *The Drunkard exposes himself to many Temptations, and many Sins.*

Of this nature, indeed, are all those things, which have been mentioned under the preceding heads. But, beside these evils, the use of spirituous liquors produces many others. It excites to a high degree of intenseness most of the vehement passions of man; particularly anger and lust. As the government of reason is lost, and the power of conscience laid asleep; the passions, at all times sufficiently strong, assume, with increased strength, the absolute control of the man; and spur and goad him on to every crime within his reach. In this situation, it is to be remembered, he is rarely alone. Other Drunkards are usually around him; whose reason is equally enfeebled, and whose passions are equally awake. Among men of strong passions, and little reason, disputes cannot fail to arise. In such men disputes generate anger of course. Anger, here, regularly issues in quarrelling; and quarrelling terminates in maimed limbs, bloodshed, and death. A large part of the murders, which have existed in this world, have grown out of Intoxication.

4. *A Drunkard necessarily Wastes his own Property.*

This he often does, as I have already observed, by the foolish and mischievous bargains, which he makes during the hours of intoxication. But this is far from being all. In the mere purchase of strong drink he expends greater sums, than any man, without an arithmetical calculation, would suspect; and obviously greater, than moderate property can bear.

Nor is this all. A great part of his time is spent in preparing the means of intoxication; in the haunts, to which he resorts for it; among his drinking companions; and in sleeping, and wearing off, its immediate effects. All this time would, otherwise, have been employed in useful business; and would have thus been the means of increasing, instead of diminishing, his property.

Nor is he less a sufferer by that gradual diminution of bodily and mental powers mentioned above. His frame, and limbs, are of course diseased. In this manner he becomes, at times, disabled from pursuing his business at all; and, at other times, obliged to pursue it to very little purpose. What he does in this situation is but half done; and would often have been as well or much better omitted. His judgment also, and skill, are equally impaired; and, instead of directing his business with success, are wasted on feeble, fruitless plans, miserably executed. As these powers decay, he becomes careless, listless, and negligent of his concerns; and sees them continually declining, and himself daily approaching towards beggary, without either the power, or the will, to stay the deplorable progress.

Thus he voluntarily robs himself of a comfortable support in old age, and in the sickness, to which he is so eminently exposed; and, at an untimely period, withers the power, and wastes the means of enjoyment.

5. *The Drunkard destroys his Health.*

No Constitution is able to resist the scorching efficacy of that liquid fire, which this slave of sense and sin incessantly swallows. Pain, sorrow, and disease, are its inevitable effects. The stomach becomes speedily too much weakened to receive, and the appetite to relish, food; until both have been stimulated by a new draught. Speedily, the limbs complain, and decay; the senses become obtuse; and all the energy of the body gradually wastes away.

In this situation, also, the skill of the Physician, and the power of Medicine, are rendered useless. A large proportion of all the useful medicines, those, particularly, which the diseases of drinking men chiefly demand, are stimulants. But these men have used one of the most powerful of all stimulants so often, and so long, that medicines of this nature cease to operate upon their constitutions with their proper sanative power. They are left, therefore, in a peculiar degree, to the ravages, and sufferings, of disease, without the usual means of cure, consolation, or hope.

6. *The Drunkard wastes his Reputation.*

A good name is better than great riches. It would be no small consolation, therefore, to a man of this description, under the loss of his property and his health, if he could at the same time preserve his Character. But, unhappily for him, his reputation is squandered faster than his property, and destroyed more suddenly than his health. Drunkenness is a sin, which, after it has once become habitual, is so rarely relinquished, as hardly to admit the feeblest hope of reformation. In a very early part of his progress, therefore, he becomes branded with the full and entire character of a *Drunkard.* His reputation, of course, is lost at an untimely period; and his infamy is of a premature growth. But what character can be more degrading, more indicative of the loss of virtue, and common sense, and of the voluntary assumption of folly and self-pollution? What name is more scandalous; more evidential, that a man has left his proper rank in the Creation, and sunk himself down to the level of brutes; than that of a *Sot?* But on this reputation, thus wantonly and profligately wasted, hangs almost all the comfort and usefulness of men. To preserve it fresh and untainted, therefore, is alike their interest and their duty: a duty indispensable; an interest, which cannot be estimated. He, who does not highly value it, is a fool. He, who wantonly throws it away, is a madman.

7. *The Drunkard destroys his Reason.*

Reason has been often, and justly, styled "*the light of the mind.*" Mr. Locke with great force and beauty styles it "*the candle of the Lord, shining within man.*" It is our only ultimate

directress. Even the doctrines and precepts of Revelation can be nothing to us, until Reason has first discerned it to be a Revelation; and determined the real import of its precepts and doctrines. Still more absolutely is it the Arbiter of all our ordinary concerns. For these we have no other guide, and can submit them to no other control. In a word, Reason makes us men; and without it we should be brutes.

But this invaluable possession, this essence of his character as a human being, himself, his all, the Drunkard rapidly wastes away.

8. *The Drunkard destroys his Usefulness.*

This Evil is dreadfully involved in the loss of his property, health, reputation, and reason. The perpetual degradation, with which he daily appears to the eyes of those around him, not only forbids the esteem, and confidence, which are indispensable to the attainment of useful business; but renders him an object of abhorrence and loathing. Thus, without reputation to recommend him to others, or property, or even inclination, to befriend them; with health and Reason so decayed, as to be unable to befriend himself; he ceases to be of any serious use to either. Of course, he becomes a burden, a nuisance, a calamity, to the world. *Good would it have been for this man, if he had never been born.*

In the mean time, sunk and lost as he is, he continues, and usually for a length of time, to be a merry and jovial haunter of taverns and dram-shops; and, like a vessel of variolus matter occasionally opened, spreads, from day to day, a pestilential contagion through the clusters of miserable wretches, who frequent these dangerous resorts. Few men injure a community more dreadfully than a drunkard. The sin, which peculiarly constitutes his character, is almost wholly derived from example. Every such example therefore, is the real cause of extending the evil to succeeding generations, as well as of corrupting his contemporaries. Were the injurers of mankind to receive their real deserts; Newgate would exchange many of its present tenants for the mischievous slaves of strong drink.

9. *The Drunkard ruins his Family.*

In this comprehensive and affecting article, several particulars merit the most serious consideration.

First; *He spreads through his family the habit of Intoxication.*

The influence of parental example, especially when an evil example, I have already had occasion particularly to unfold. In the present melancholy case, all the power of such an example is felt to the utmost. It is an example seen daily, in the house, and in the parent. It is seen by children so soon as they can see any thing; and long before their minds are capable of distinguishing its nature, or its tendency. The parent visibly regards spirituous liquors as a peculiarly interesting enjoyment of sense, at a time when they know no enjoyments but those of sense. Of course, they cannot but think it eminently valuable. The means

of intoxication are also provided to their hand; and their own home, so far as a dangerous and malignant influence is concerned, is changed into a Dram-shop. The mother, in the mean time, not unfrequently contracts the same evil habit from the father; and thus both Parents unite in the unnatural and monstrous employment of corrupting their children. What a prospect is here presented to our view! A husband and wife, to whom God has given children, to be trained up by them for Heaven, united together in taking them by the hand, and leading them coolly to perdition. What heart, not made of stone, can look at such a family, without feeling exquisite distress, and the most terrible forebodings? Contemplate, for a moment, the innocent helpless beings, perfectly unconscious of their danger, and incapable of learning it, thus led as victims to the altar of a Modern *Moloch*, less sanguinary indeed, but not less cruel, than the heathen god, before whom the Israelitish Parents burnt their own Offspring; and say, whether you most pity the children, or detest the parents.

Secondly. *By squandering his property he deprives them of both Comfort and Respectability.*

The comfort, which we enjoy in the present world, so far as the world itself is concerned, is principally found in realizing the expectations, which we have rationally, and habitually, formed, concerning our future circumstances in life. These expectations are, of course, grounded on the circumstances of our Parents. We expect what we are thus taught to expect; and this naturally is, that we receive such an Education, and pass through life in such a manner, as is common to the children of those, who are in similar circumstances. These expectations the drunken parent gradually fritters away with the gradual diminution of his Estate. The mind of the Child sees, with more and more discouragement, one expected gratification vanish after another, till it ceases to expect at all; and sinks down into sullen, or broken-hearted despair.

Among the evils, which children suffer, *a prime one is the loss of Education*, of that Education, I mean, which is suited to their condition in life. The instructions, which children receive, are a debt, which no parent can without extreme guilt refuse to discharge; and of which no child can be prevented, but by robbery, as well as fraud. They are the chief means of his future comfort, and his future usefulness. They take him out of the list of Savages; and place him in the rank of Men. They form him to wisdom, to worth, and to honour. Beyond this, they open to him the gates of virtue, glory, and immortality; and point to him the path to Heaven.

The most important of these instructions the Parent himself is able, and therefore bound, to give; the instructions especially of a moral and religious nature, which are given, and received, with incomparably the greatest efficacy in the morning of life. But

what instructions can a drunkard communicate? What must be the efficacy even of Truth itself, proceeding from disturbed reason, a reeling frame, and a babbling tongue? With this image before him, what child can sufficiently withdraw himself from shame, and anguish, to learn at all? With what a contradictory, and monstrous deformity of character, must religious truths and precepts be inculcated on his child by a man, imbruted by strong drink!

The Government of Children is obviously of no less importance, than their Instruction. But what must be the Government, exercised by a Sot? A mixture of contradictions, imbecility, and rage; a mixture, which every child, six years old, perfectly understands; and which no child of that age can respect, or love. How can he reprove them for their faults? His own life is nothing but a tissue of faults. How can he enjoin upon them virtuous conduct? His own life is a perpetual war upon Virtue. How can he recommend to them religion? His whole character is an insult upon religion. All this his children perfectly know; and their meaning eyes, if he will look into them, will tell him the story in language unutterable.

Thirdly. *He breaks their hearts by subjecting them to insupportable Mortification.*

The Drunkard presents his family with the melancholy sight of an intoxicated Parent: an image always before their eyes: an image, which sinks them in the dust: an image, which overwhelms them in despair. What Child can look at such an object, and remember that this object is his Parent, without a broken heart?

The distsesses, thus experienced, he renders double-edged by his own fretful and passionate temper. All Drunkards, almost, assume this temper, of course; and in this manner become intolerable nuisances to those, with whom they are most intimately connected. The house of a Drunkard is always the seat of discontent, and turmoil. The sufferings of his family soon become too great to be borne with patience. Complaints, which nature cannot stifle, beget criminations, reproaches, abuses, and quarrels; terminating, not unfrequently, in wounds, bloodshed, and death.

In this manner the *temper* of his family is ruined. They are taught, and in a sense forced, to become hostile to each other; and prepared to become enemies to mankind. At the same time, they are rendered uncomfortable to themselves; and should they have families of their own, are made curses to them also.

Their spirits, in the mean time, are broken down by an unceasing consciousness, which they cannot escape, that their disgrace, in all its complication, is known, and published, wherever *they* are known. *The head*, at least, of their domestic body *is* not only distressingly, but scandalously *sick;* and sick with a

hopeless, as well as shameful disease. The *members*, in greater or less degrees, *suffer* with the head; and, *for* it at least, suffer inexpressibly.

To all these things ought to be added their continual apprehension, that their husband, and parent, will come to some dreadful disaster, or to an untimely end, by some one of that numerous train of accidents, to which he is daily exposed; and the terrible conviction, that, should he even escape these evils, he is still going regularly onward to final perdition. This consummation of evils they are compelled to expect, with an assurance little short of absolute knowledge; and cannot fail to tremble in the morning, lest the dreadful event should arrive before the close of the day.

10. *The Drunkard destroys his Life.*

The Drunkard is as really a Suicide, as if he compassed his death by the pistol, or the halter. The difference is, principally, that the destruction is slower, and accomplished by a long succession of sins, and not by one bold and desperate effort of turpitude; and that the Drunkard, instead of aiming at his life, aims merely at the gratification of his appetite: while the Suicide makes his own destruction his prime purpose. The Drunkard is a negligent, the Suicide an intentional Self-Murderer. Often, indeed, the Drunkard destroys himself in a moment. Often, as I have already observed, he falls from his horse; or into the fire; or into the water; or is brought to an untimely end by some other fatal accident. Most usually, however, he wastes, gradually, the taper of life before the time; and thus cuts off one fourth, one third, or one half, of his *accepted time*: even while he lives, by his desperate progress in sin he terminates all his hopes of salvation.

11. *The Drunkard ruins his Soul.*

It has been heretofore observed, that the Drunkard destroys his Reason. In this manner he is unfitted for all profitable use of the means of Grace, and for all attention to eternal life. Every call of mercy finds him stupid and regardless. To every threatening, his ears are deaf: to every promise his heart is insensible. The power of Motives he knows not how to feel: and even their nature he cannot comprehend. To temptations, on the contrary, he is always exposed, alive, and awake. Around him, therefore, temptations throng, and every tempter fastens on him as his prey. Sin, of course, becomes his business: and *he draws iniquity as with a cart-rope.*

In the mean time, he is, beyond most other men, hopeless of reformation. The hopeless condition of a Sot is proverbial. Amendment in this case is so rare, as scarcely to admit belief. Indeed, Heaven seems to have stamped this sin almost always with reprobation. To complete his miserable condition, he is cut off from prayer. No person, who intends to sin, can pray. No person,

who intends to tempt himself, as the Drunkard always does, can say, *Lead me not into temptation; but deliver me from evil:* and no person, who cannot pray, can be saved. Thus the Drunkard holds out to his family, and to the world, the deplorable spectacle of a sinner, hardened beyond the common measure; exposing himself to sin, of every kind, and in every degree, and yet voluntarily depriving himself of the usual means of repentance; hastening to perdition, and yet closing his eyes to the dangers of the precipice on which he stands, and to the terrors of the gulf, which opens beneath.

IV. *I shall now endeavour summarily to point out the Means of Avoiding this dreadful Evil.*

1. *Among these Means, it will be readily seen, must be the avoidance of the Causes, by which Intoxication is solicited, or encouraged.*

Most of these causes may, ordinarily, be avoided by a little care, and a little resolution. No persons, except the family of the drunkard, are obliged to be present, unless casually, to examples of this nature. No person is necessitated to frequent the places in which, or company of the persons by whom, this evil habit is encouraged. Every man can avoid regular drinking. That all this is the duty of every man, a duty of the most pressing kind, will not be questioned. Every thing, here, depends *on resisting*, or avoiding, *the beginnings of evil.*

Peculiarly, is it the duty, and wisdom, of all men to abstain from the haunts of drunkenness, from drinking companions, and from regular drinking. Almost all habits of intoxication are originated by one, or other of these causes. He, who becomes familiar with these temptations, is advancing to perdition with his eyes open.

2. *The man, who finds in himself any peculiar relish for spirituous liquors, is bound to abstain from them wholly.*

The relish for these increases, invariably, with every instance, and degree, of indulgence. To cherish it, therefore, is to make ourselves drunkards; and it is cherished most efficaciously by repeated drinking. No man will do this, who is not a fair candidate for bedlam.

3. *All persons, who have already begun the habit of intoxication, are bound to desist, absolutely, from all use of strong drink.*

Every effort at gradual reformation will only cheat him, who makes it. At first, it may seem to promise something; but it will soon be found to perform nothing of any use. The candidate for reformation will speedily find himself more entangled than ever, and at a greater distance from the reformation intended. Hard as the case may be, he must break off at once, or be ruined.

4. *Persons, not peculiarly in danger of this evil, are, nevertheless, bound scrupulously to guard against it.*

No reputation, no wisdom, nor hardly any worth, will secure man against Drunkenness. This sin is found in the cottage, and in the palace; in the study of the Philosopher, and in the Sacred desk; in the hall of council, and on the bench of Justice; and, contrary to what would seem the dictates of nature, as well as delicacy, in the female sex; even in instances, where distinction, understanding, amiableness, and refinement would appear to forbid even the suspicion. In most, if not all, of these cases, the evil creeps insensibly on the unhappy subject; and overcomes him before he is aware. A prime object, to be here regarded, is, therefore, *to keep the danger always before our eyes.* We are ever to feel that we ourselves are in danger; and to consider a habitual, lively, dread of it as our first safety. We are to form, also, vigorous and standing resolutions, that we will not be overcome. These we are invariably to form in the fear of God; with a solemn recollection of his presence; with a humble dependence on Him to bless us; and with fervent supplications for his blessing. To strengthen our resolutions, and to keep our fears awake, we are to mark the miserable victims of this sin with anxiety and terror; to regard the sin itself as *the highway to Hell;* and to realize, that in yielding to it we seal our own reprobation.

To all this conduct motives can never be wanting. Multitudes, of the highest import, and the most commanding efficacy, have been already suggested in the progress of this discourse. Every heart in this house, which is not formed of adamant, must have felt their force. Nothing pleads for it, except the mere appetite for strong drink: an appetite, usually unnatural, and created by casual indulgence. All things else in Heaven, and in Earth, exclaim against it with a single voice. Our health, our reputation, our safety, our reason, our usefulness, our lives, our souls, our families, and our friends, in solemn and affecting union, urge, entreat, and persuade, us to abstain. God commands; Christ solicits; the Spirit of Grace influences; us to abstain. Angels and Glorified Saints behold our conduct with such anxiety and alarm, as happy beings can feel; and watch, and hope, to see our escape. The Law with a terrible voice thunders in our ears that dreadful denunciation, "Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Even Hell itself, hostile as it is to our salvation, follows the rest of the Universe; and, in spite of its own malevolence, subjoins its dreadful admonition, by marshalling before us the innumerable hosts of miserable wretches, whom this sin has driven to its mansions of despair. Who, that does not already sleep the sleep of death, can refuse to hear, awake, and live?

SERMON CXIX.

SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.—THE ORIGIN, NATURE, AND BENEFITS OF MARRIAGE.

EXODUS XX. 14.—*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

BEFORE I enter upon the direct consideration of the precept in the Text, it will be useful, for the purpose of illustrating and enforcing it, to examine the nature of *Marriage*. The Sin, immediately forbidden in the Text, derives, in some respects, its existence from this *Institution;* and is, in all respects, intimately connected with it, in whatever manner, or degree, the *Sin* may exist. Such an Examination, also, derives particular importance from the fact, that it has been rarely made in the Desk. Indeed, I do not know where it has been made, in such a manner, as to satisfy my own wishes.

In discussing this Subject I shall consider,

I. *The Origin;*

II. *The Nature;* and,

III. *The Benefits; of Marriage.*

I. *The Origin of Marriage is from God.*

In other words, *Marriage is a Divine Institution.*

The proof of this position is complete in the following passage. Matth. xix. 3—6. *The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered, and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He, which made them at the beginning, made them male and female; And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

In this passage of Scripture our Saviour declares, that, when God had created man male and female, he said, *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh.* These, it is ever to be remembered, are the words of God Himself; as they are here declared to be by Christ; and not, as they have often been erroneously supposed to be, the words of *Adam.* God made man male and female for this end; and in these words delivered his own Ordinance to mankind; at once permitting, and directing, that a man, henceforth, should leave his father and mother; and *that* lawfully, notwithstanding his high, and otherwise indissoluble, obligations

to them; and be united to his wife. Accordingly, He declares them, henceforth, to be no more twain, but one.

That these words contain an Institution of God, and that this Institution is Marriage, cannot be doubted for a moment. The only question which can be asked concerning the subject, is, For whom was this institution designed? Plainly it was not designed for *Adam* and *Eve:* for they had neither father nor mother; and were, therefore, not included in the terms of the Ordinance; and, being already married by God Himself, were necessarily excluded from any Ordinance, succeeding that event. The Ordinance, then, respected their posterity only: and, as it is delivered in absolutely indefinite terms, terms unrestricted to any individuals, or collections of mankind it respected all their posterity alike.

In this manner it is directly explained by our Saviour, in the passage quoted above. The Pharisees asked Him, *whether it* was *lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause.* Christ replies, that, in consequence of this Institution, a man and his wife are no more twain, but one; that is, a man and his wife, *at the time in which he was speaking, and from the time, when this ordinance was wade,* are no more twain, but, from the day of their marriage, are by this Ordinance constituted one. Accordingly, he subjoins, *What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.* As if he had said, "God hath joined together by this Ordinance all men and wowen, who are lawfully married; or, in other words, every lawfully married pair." Man, therefore, cannot lawfully disjoin them. Here it is evident beyond a debate, that our Saviour pronounced *men to be married, or joined together, at the time, when He made these declarations, by God Himself in this Ordinance.* Of course, the Ordinance, extends to all lawfully married persons.

II. *The Nature of Marriage may be explained in the following manner.*

Marriage is an union between two persons of the different sexes. It is carefully to be remembered, that *the Ordinance of God which gave birth to it, limits the Union to two.* God said, *For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife;* not, *Men shall leave their fathers and mothers, and shall cleave unto their wife;* nor, *A man shall leave his father and nother and shall cleave unto his wives, And they twain shall be one:* Not, *they indefinitely, without declaring how many;* nor *they three, four, or five; but they twain.* The Ordinance, therefore, on which alone Marriage is lawfully founded, limits this Union, in the most express and definite manner, to two persons. What God has thus established, man cannot alter.

It is the most Intimate Union which exists in the present world. The persons who are thus united, are joined together in a more intimate relation, than any other, which exists, or can exist, among mankind. No attachment is so strong; no tenderness is so great,

as that, which is originated, and cherished, by this Institution. This is directly predicted, and very forcibly declared, in the passage, which I have quoted from St. Matthew. *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one.* Accordingly, the union of affections, interests, labours, and life, here existing, has no parallel in the present world.

It is also a Perpetual Union. The connexion is entered into by both parties for life. God has constituted it by joining the parties with his own Infinite Authority; and has forbidden man to put them asunder. It is indissoluble, therefore, on any ground, but that of Crime: a crime of one kind only; and in its nature fatal to all the blessings, and hopes, intended by the Institution.

It is an Union, also, formed by a most solemn Covenant. In this Covenant God is appealed to, as a Witness of the sincere affections, and upright designs, of the parties; both of whom engage, mutually, the exercise of those affections, and the pursuit of that conduct, which, together, are the most efficacious means of their mutual happiness. This Covenant plainly approaches very near to the solemnity, and obligation, of an Oath; and, exclusively of that, in which Man gives himself up to God, is, without a doubt, the most solemn, and the most important, ever entered into by Man. When the duties of it are faithfully performed; they furnish a fair foundation for the best hopes, that the Union will be immortal.

III. *The Benefits of this Institution are incalculably numerous, and inestimably important.*

This truth is clearly evident from the observations, already made, concerning the Origin and Nature of Marriage. It is also forcibly evinced by the manner, in which the subject is elsewhere exhibited in the Scriptures.

The violation of the Marriage Covenant was of such consequence in the view of the Divine Mind, that it was made the subject of one of the Commands in the Decalogue.

In the laws concerning this subject, given to the *Israelites*, curses were pronounced in form against the direct violations of the Marriage vow; and the violaters were punished with death.

Of Adulterers, and all other transgressors of the Seventh Command, it is declared, in the New Testament, that *they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. None of those who go in to the strange woman*, says Solomon, *turn again; neither take they hold of the paths of life.*

The relation between Christ and his Church is, throughout the Scriptures, exhibited as a Marriage. God says to His Church, *Thy Maker is thy Husband:* JEHOVAH OF HOSTS *is His name.* The Angel in the Revelation styles the Church *the Bride, the Lamb's Wife.*

From these and other similar exhibitions of this subject in the Scriptures, it must necessarily be supposed, that God regarded Marriage as pre-eminently important, and beneficial, to mankind.

The Benefits of Marriage, however, like those of every other practical concern, are chiefly to be learned from facts. I shall, therefore, apply directly to that extensive source of information; and exhibit with a brief survey, such of these benefits, unfolded by human experience, as the present opportunity will permit.

1. *Marriage is, extensively, the means of Comfort to the married Pair.*

This was originally proposed by God as an important end of the Institution. *And the Lord God said, It is not good, that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.* Accordingly, this end has been regularly accomplished from the beginning.

Licentious men, both of ancient and modern times, have carried on a course of open, and incessant, hostility against this Institution; as they have, indeed, against all the real interests of mankind. In the progress of this warfare, they have arraigned the wisdom, and denied the benefits, of it; charged upon it evils, which it does not produce; and enhanced those, which are incident to the Marriage-state. The unhappy marriages, which have been contracted in violation of the law of our nature and of the Scriptures, comparatively few in number, and only exceptions to the general truth under discussion, they have multiplied without consideration, or integrity; and have brought them up to public view as just exhibitions of the Marriage-state in general. In a word, they have treated this subject, as they customarily treat others of a serious nature. They have misstated facts; they have sophisticated arguments; and, where neither would answer their purpose, they have endeavoured to accomplish it by contempt, sneers, and ridicule.

This conduct, censurable and mischievous as it is, is, perhaps, not to be wondered at in men of such a character. But it is to be wondered at, that men of a far better character should have followed their steps. A man of even moderate reflection must be equally surprised, and wounded, to see how many, otherwise respectable, writers in the peculiarly enlightened Kingdom of Great Britain have, in a greater or less degree, lent their names, to foster the wretched calumnies and falsehoods, heaped so undeservedly upon this subject.

That there are unhappy marriages, and that the number of them is considerable, I am not disposed to question. There are many persons, whose passions are too violent, or whose temper is too sordid, to permit them to be happy in any situation. Persons marry, at times, whose dispositions are wholly incompatible with each other. There are vicious persons, who will neither be

happy themselves, nor suffer others to be happy. All these, it is readily conceded, will find little happiness in the Marriage-state.

The propensities, inwrought into our nature as a law, and the declarations of Scripture, teach us alike, and irresistibly, that this Union is to be formed only on the ground of affection, regulated by prudence. On this plan, and on this only, can Marriage be reasonably expected to be happy. We are not therefore to wonder, that persons, who marry for the purposes of allying themselves to families of distinction; acquiring, or repairing, fortunes; obtaining rank; or gratifying, in any manner, ambition, avarice, or sensuality; should afterwards find themselves unhappy. These persons do not, intentionally, marry either husbands or wives. They marry distinction, fortunes, titles, villas, luxury, and grandeur. The objects, to which they intentionally unite themselves, they acquire. It cannot be wondered at, that they do not gain those, which they never sought; nor that they do not find the blessings of marriage, following plans and actions, which, unless incidentally, have no relation to Marriage. These persons, it is true, find the objects, to which they are really wedded, incumbered by beings, who stand in the places of husbands and wives. Still, they cannot form even a pretence for complaining; since, with their eyes open, they voluntarily subject themselves, for the sake of such gratifications, to all the evils, arising out of the incumbrance. The person, who wishes to obtain the blessings, designed by this or any other Institution of God, must intentionally conform to the nature and spirit of the Institution itself; and to all the precepts concerning it, by which He has manifested His own pleasure.

I have lived in very many families; and these, often in plain, as well as polished life. With very many more, extensively diversified in character and circumstances, I have been intimately acquainted. By the evidence, arising from these facts, I am convinced, that the great body of married persons are rendered more happy by this Union; and are as happy, as their character, and their circumstances, could permit us to expect. Poverty cannot, whether in the married or single state, enjoy the pleasures of wealth; avarice, those of generosity; ambition, those of moderation; ignorance, those of knowledge; vulgarity, those of refinement; passion, those of gentleness; nor vice, in whatever form, those of virtue. The evils, here specified, Marriage, it is true, cannot remove. Nor are they removable by Celibacy: and, where these evils exist, neither Celibacy, nor Marriage, can confer the contrary blessings. *Grapes, here, will not grow upon thorns, nor figs upon thistles.* Nothing but folly can lead us to expect, that this Institution will change the whole nature of those who enter into it; and, like a magical spell, confer knowledge, virtue, and loveliness, upon beings who have neither.

2. *Another end of this Institution is the Preservation and Comfort of Children.*

The experience of all ages, and countries, so far as it has extended to this subject, has uniformly shown, that the offspring of illicit concubinage suffer innumerable evils, to which those born in wedlock are not subjected. In a prodigious multitude of instances, they perish before, or immediately after, they are born. In a vast multitude of others, they die in the early periods of childhood. They suffer from hunger, cold, nakedness, negligence, the want of nursing, watching, medicine, and every other comfort of life. The peculiar affection of Married Parents, and the peculiar efforts to which it gives birth, have ever been indispensable to the preservation of children from these evils, the establishment of their health, and the continuance of their lives. Children need ten thousand supplies, cares, and tendernesses, which nothing but this affection will ever furnish; and without which, they either die suddenly, or waste away with a lingering dissolution.

This work of raising up children from infancy to manhood, is the most laborious of all our worldly concerns; and requires more efforts of both body and mind, more toil, care, patience, and perseverance, than any other. To most men, indeed, it is a great part of all, which, ordinarily, they find to do in their secular business.

For this great work, God, with Wisdom, which can never be sufficiently admired, has made effectual provision by the parental tenderness, always existing, and flourishing, in Married Parents, with so few exceptions, as to demand no attention here; but always withered, and commonly destroyed, by promiscuous concubinage. This tenderness, neither time nor toil, neither care nor anxiety, neither trouble nor disappointment, neither filial ingratitude nor filial profligacy, can overcome, exhaust, or discourage. Other affections become cold, wearied, and disheartened; and are often converted into negligence, or hatred. But this, like the Celestial Fire in the Jewish Temple, burns by night and by day; and is, through this world, an everlasting flame which cannot be extinguished. Without it, what would become of Children in poverty, in their rebellion, and in their profligacy? Who would watch over them; who relieve, supply, endure, and forgive?

In promiscuous concubinage, children would be left to the mercy of the world; to the supplies of accident; to the charity of the street; to the bleak and desolate waste; to the frozen hospital; and to the inclemencies of the sky: to pine with hunger; to chill with nakedness; to shrivel with unkindness; to consume with premature disease; to die an untimely death: and, denied a grave, now the privilege even of beggars, to feed the beasts of the field, and the fowls of Heaven.

3. *This Institution is the source of all the Natural Relations of mankind.*

By these I mean the relations of husband and wife, (which in a subordinate sense may be called natural) those of Parents and children, of brothers and sisters, together with many others, which are of considerable, although of inferior, importance. These relations are immensely more interesting, and useful, to the world, than any, nay, than all, others. They connect mankind by bonds, far more intimate, delightful, and enduring; resist incomparably more the irregular, evil, and stormy passions of man, soften his rugged nature; overthrow his violent purposes; and spread through the world a degree of peace, and moderation, which without them would be impossible.

4. *This Institution is the source of all the gentle, and useful, Natural Affections.*

These are Conjugal Tenderness, Parental Love, Filial Piety, and Brotherly and Sisterly Attachment: far the most amiable, endearing, permanent, and useful, native affections of man. No other affections have, originally, any softness, sweetness, or loveliness; but all owe to these every thing, which is of this nature. All our native amiableness is awakened by the presence of those whom we love: and we originally love those only, who form the domestic circle, within which we were born; those, from whom we early received the offices of tenderness. Here, Natural Affection first springs. Here, also, it grows and flourishes; and from its stem, deeply rooted here, sends abroad its boughs and branches, its blossoms and fruits. The mind, here strengthened, and refined, begins to wander abroad into the neighbourhood, to find new objects for attachment in other families. Relations, less near, easily slide into its affections; and are enrolled by it in the list of those whom it loves. To these succeed, in their turns, a train of friends, neighbours, and countrymen: until the sphere swells beyond the limits of its comprehension. What would this world be without these affections; and without the conduct, to which they give birth? Nothing good would ever be begun; much less be carried on, and conducted to a prosperous conclusion. But these affections commence, are cherished, and confirmed, in families only; and without them would either never exist at all, or be mere abortions.

5. *This Institution is the source of all Industry and Economy.*

Industry is the source, and Economy the preservation, of all the comfortable subsistence of man. But Industry, as is proverbially observed, is not natural to the human race. On the contrary, it is the result of education, and habit, only. Accordingly, the Savages of all Countries, being uneducated to industrious exertion, are lazy in the extreme; and are roused to toil, only by the calls of Hunger. This habit cannot even be begun, as the education, whence it is derived, cannot exist to any considerable extent, but in families; nor by any other persons, except Parents; nor at any other period, beside childhood. Without families, indeed, Indus-

try would not exist: and without Industry the world would be a desert.

Economy is not less necessary to human comfort, than Industry; and is still more unnatural to man. It demands the attention of every day to those things, which we are to preserve; and this attention is more irksome, than labour itself. Fewer persons overcome their reluctance to it. Savages are always Squanderers. Exposed as they perpetually are to want and famine; and frequently, and distressingly, as they suffer from these evils; such is their reluctance to this employment, that they go on from age to age, wasting, suffering, and perishing.

Early, watchful, and long-continued Education will alone establish a habit either of Industry, or Economy. The attention, the authority, and the example, of Parents, are all equally, and indispensably, necessary to the creation of this habit: and, without them all, it cannot in any extensive manner exist. Savages, indeed, have families; and are married parents. It may, therefore, be asked, why their children are not educated to these habits. The answer I have already given. Neither the attention, authority, nor example, of Savage Parents are at all exerted for this end, so far as their male children are concerned; and very imperfectly with respect to those of the other sex. Of these, however, both the Industry and Economy fully answer to the degree of Education, which they receive; and to the opportunities, which they enjoy of exercising them. My position is, that, without a domestic education, these things would never exist: not that that education, be it what it may, or that a mere domestic existence, will give them birth. Besides, Savage Parents neither understand, nor perform, the great body of duties, created by this Institution. Yet even they, in these, as well as in other important particulars, derive real and considerable advantages from the domestic state.

Without Industry and Economy, what would become of mankind? Their enjoyments, their improvements, their virtues, and their hopes, would all vanish at once: nay, their very subsistence would disappear. The earth, within a few years, would be emptied of ninety-nine hundredths of its inhabitants. Europe would be changed into a Lapland waste; and these States into a Patagonian forest.

6. *This Institution is the source of all Education to useful Knowledge, and to Civility and Sweetness of Manners.*

Parents are the only persons, who love children sufficiently well to be anxious about their Education in any thing. Nor would any others support them, while obtaining their Education. No others would teach them those indispensable things, which they learn at home. By whom are schools built? By a Collection of families. By whom are the Instructers supported? By a Collection of families, assembled in a neighbourhood. By whom are Colleges erected; Instructers sustained; Libraries furnished; and other

means of superior education supplied? By larger Collections of families: such Collections as have actually raised *these* buildings; stocked them with all their furniture; and sent hither the youths, who are now before me, for Education.

Education occupies a great part of chil lhood and youth; and is a long-continued, laborious, expensive, and often a discouraging, concern. Ordinary feelings would supply neither the labour, nor the expense. Parents, only, experience the necessary affection. Families, only, could sustain the necessary expense.

Much of the Education of Children is furnished by Example; and is dependent on the propensity to imitation. This principle operates powerfully upon children in the early periods of life, because it is stronger at that, than at any future, age; and because they are continually in the midst of those, whose example they are most disposed to follow, both from peculiar affection, and from the fact, that it is always before them.

But the efficacy of this principle operates powerfully, also, in another way. Parents love to be like other Parents, and to have their children like other children. When, therefore, the children of one family are furnished with the advantages of Education; the Parents of other children, in the neighbourhood, are prompted to educate them also; not only by ambition, but by the general disposition, which we have to be like others.

At the same time, and under the same authority of Parents, Civility and Softness of Manners are begun, and established, in families. Here, only, arise the affections, out of which this ornamental part of the human character springs. In no other place, among no other persons, and in no other circumstances, can these affections find their proper objects, or their proper motives. Of course, in no other place can they begin to exist. Much less can they elsewhere find room for that continual exercise, that delightful interchange, which is absolutely necessary to their strength and permanency. From families only, therefore, can the world derive the innumerable blessings, flowing from these sources.

7. *This Institution is the source of all Subordination, and Government; and, consequently, of all Order, Peace, and Safety, in the world.*

In a family, Children are taught, as soon as they are taught any thing, to obey; and to obey those, who, loving them tenderly, are the fit, and the only fit persons to govern them, or to teach them submission and obedience. Others would rule them only with the rod of power; with a despotism, from which they would think it a privilege to escape; a dominion, from which, as soon as possible, they would revolt; an authority, which they would hate; and submission to which would be such an evil, as naturally to make them hate all other authority.

But Parents rule with tenderness and love; and usually engage the strong affection of Children to the authority, which they exer-

cise, and to themselves, while exercising it. The Children learn to obey from choice; and are pleased with the very employment of obeying.

Obedience is also taught, here, in that early period of life, at which it is impressed so deeply, as never to be effaced. Impressions of every kind, made at this period, are, it is well known, indelible; and survive all others; especially, when made by those, in whom tenderness and authority are united, and to whom reverence and affection are rendered in the highest degree. This, however, is not all. These impressions are daily and hourly repeated; and by this repetition are gradually wrought into an immoveable habit. In this manner they become the only visible nature of the child; and constitute his chief, and often his only, character.

In this manner, and only in this manner, are children effectually prepared to submit to all other lawful authority. In this manner they become peaceful, and orderly, through life; imbibe a spirit of respect and kindness towards others; are formed into good members of society, and fitted to sustain the character of good neighbours and good friends. Equally necessary is this discipline to make them good Subjects, and good Magistrates. Few persons are good Subjects of Civil Government, who have not been trained to this character by a wise domestic administration: and not one of these would sustain this character, but for the example of those, who have been thus trained. It is proverbially true, also, that none are qualified to govern, except those, who have early learned to obey.

In hardly any thing is the Institution of Marriage, and the consequent formation of Families, exhibited as more necessary, or more wise, than in this origination, and establishment, of good order in the world. "Order," as *Mr. Pope* has justly observed, "is Heaven's first law." The great task of establishing it among such beings, as we are; selfish, revolting, and refractory; God has assigned to an innumerable multitude of hands: a multitude sufficiently great to receive it in portions, so small and so circumstanced, as to insure both the ability, and the inclination, to accomplish it effectually. These portions are so small, as to involve only the children of a single family. To this little flock are given, regularly, two Rulers, better disposed, and better qualified, in almost all instances, than any other persons, found in the world. The circumstances, in which those are placed, who are to be governed, are more favourable to the accomplishment of this great end, than any others can be. Their infancy, childhood, and youth, in succession; their ignorance, feebleness, dependence; the affection, superiority, care, and kindness, of the Parents; and the instinctive love, and reverence, of the children; together with their necessary and long-continued residence in the parental mansion; present to the contemplative eye a combination of things evidencing, by their supreme and singular adaptation to this important purpose, a glori-

ous work of the Wisdom of God. Fewer hands could not possibly accomplish this mighty task. All the wisdom of Legislation, all the energy of Despotism, would be spent upon it in vain. Millions of minds, and tongues, and hands, are indispensable to it, even in a single Country. It is, beyond calculation, a greater and more arduous work than all the labours of all Rulers, Legislative, Executive, and Judicial, united. Nor could those, to whom it is intrusted, accomplish it in any other circumstances. Children, grown up to manhood without government, could never be governed. A generation of such children would set at defiance all the laws and magistrates in the Universe; and would never yield to any control, but that of the sword. Were Parents to intermit their labours, during a single generation, no Government could, thenceforth, exist in that Country, until terrible necessity should force upon it a military despotism. Anarchy, until that period, would rear its wild misrule, ravage every human interest, and rase every human dwelling. In this very land, flourishing and wantoning in all the blessings of Liberty, the musket, the dungeon, and the gibbet, would be the only means of public peace, order, and safety.

8. *Marriage is the source of all the Religion which exists in the world.*

This important truth is completely evident from the following particulars.

In the first place, *Persons, living in promiscuous concubinage, are never themselves religious.*

There never was a single instance, of this nature, since the world began. The very first step towards Religion, whenever they have ultimately become religious, has invariably been repentance, and reformation, of this enormous sin. Such persons can, therefore, never teach their children Religion, either by precept or example. Therefore,

Secondly, *Their Children grow up, of course, in Irreligion.*

There are two primary Means of Grace: the Preaching of the Gospel; and the Religious Education of Children. Of these, *Baxter* supposes Religious Education to be probably the principal, as to its efficacy, wherever the Gospel is regularly established. But, whatever be their comparative importance, it is sufficient to say, what cannot be denied, that children, who are not educated religiously, rarely become religious, even in the midst of those, who are thus educated; and that a generation of such children would, of course, be a generation of profligates. But married persons, only, ever educate their children religiously; or present to them that example, without which their instructions would be given to no purpose.

Thirdly. *None but married Parents build Churches, support Ministers, or frequent the Worship of God.*

That the irreligion of persons, living in promiscuous concubinage, would never give birth to these things, nor to any of them,

needs no proof. But without all these things, Religion, as the world is constituted, cannot exist. The loss of the Sabbath alone soon becomes, every where, the loss of Religion. The Preaching of the Gospel, united with the Ordinances of Public Worship, is the only effectual mean of keeping Religious Education alive in the world. Religious Education, in its turn, gives existence and life to Public Worship: and both united, are the great and efficacious means of continuing the Kingdom of God, and producing the Salvation of Man.

Such, in a summary view, are *the Origin*, *the Nature*, and *the Benefits*, *of Marriage*. No man of common sobriety, can hesitate to acknowledge, that these benefits are inestimable and immense. Of course, the Institution, whence they were derived, and without which they would not exist, is of incomprehensible importance to mankind. How worthy of the Wisdom of the Infinite Mind is the erection of so vast, and so glorious, a fabric, upon a foundation so simple, apparently so inadequate, and yet proved by all the experience of Man to be sufficiently extensive, solid, and enduring! How small a cause, to the human eye, is here seen to produce effects, innumerable in their multitude, and supreme in their importance! What serious mind can hesitate to acknowledge, that such a Work is wrought by the Counsel of God?

SERMON CXX.

SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.—LEWDNESS.

EXODUS XX. 14.—*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

HAVING in the preceding discourse considered *the Origin, Nature, and Benefits of Marriage;* the Institution, which is the basis of the prohibition in the Text; I shall now proceed to examine *the Prohibition itself.*

The thing, which is here universally prohibited, is *Lewdness:* Lewdness in every form; in thought, word, and action. This is unanswerably evident from our Saviour's comment on this precept. *He, that looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

Before I begin the immediate discussion of this subject, I shall premise a few General Observations.

It is universally known, that there is, and for a great length of time has been, a riveted prejudice against the introduction of this subject into the Desk. When the peculiar delicacy, attending it, is considered; it cannot be thought strange, that such a prejudice should in some degree exist. Even the most chaste and correct observations concerning it are apt to give pain; or at least to excite an alarm in a refined and apprehensive mind. What Nature itself, perhaps, dictates, Custom and Manners have not a little enhanced. The opinions, and feelings, to which I have referred, have been carried to a length unwarranted either by the Scriptures, or Common Sense. The subject seems, in fact, to have been banished from the Desk: and Ministers, by their general and profound silence concerning it, appear to have sanctioned the conclusion, that there is one, and that not a small, part of Scripture, which, so far as Preaching is concerned, is not *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, nor for instruction in righteousness.*

But let me solemnly ask every religious man, whether this conduct can be justified. The *rejoicing* of *St. Paul*, at the close of his life, was *the testimony of a good conscience*, that *not by fleshly wisdom, but by the Grace of God, he had his conversation in the world; the testimony of a good conscience, that he was pure from the blood of all men, because he had not shunned to declare the whole Counsel of God.* Is it not a plain, and prominent, part of the Counsel of God, to forbid, to discourage, to prevent, this profligate conduct of mankind? Why else was this precept inserted in the

Decalogue; and promulged amid the lightnings of *Sinai?* Why else is it throughout the Scriptures made the subject of such forcible prohibitions, and the object of such awful threatenings?

What reason can be given, why it should not be introduced into the Desk? Can common sense either prove, or discern, the usefulness of excluding it? Is it fit, is it safe, is it not preposterous, is it not ruinous, to the best interests of mankind, to leave the whole management of it to loose and abandoned men; and to suffer them from year to year, and from century to century, to go on in a course of corruption; seducing, and destroying, thousands and millions, especially of the young, the gay, and the giddy: while we, Ministers of Christ, divinely appointed to watch for the souls of men, quietly sit by, and see them hurried on to perdition? Shall we be awed by the cry of indelicacy, originally raised by the most indelicate of mankind, only to keep the field open for its own malignant occupancy? Shall we not infinitely rather lay hold on every opportunity, and all the means furnished here, as well as elsewhere, to rescue our fellow-creatures from destruction?

And shall not the House of God, and this Sacred Day; both divinely consecrated, not only to His worship at large, but to this very end, that *the wicked* may be warned *of the error of his way, that he turn from it, and save his soul alive;* shelter this subject, a solemn prominent subject of his own express commands, awful exhortations, and terrible threatenings, from misconception, sport, and sneer? Shall not the known presence of this Tremendous Being in His House silence every unscriptural complaint; check every wayward thought; forbid every roving of an unhallowed imagination; and appal every light-minded sinner; however prone he may be to forget the presence of his Maker; or unwilling to remember, that this Great Being is, at the very time, *searching his heart, and trying his reins, to reward him according to his works?*

But why, it may be asked, may not the evil be left to other correctives? Why is it necessary, that Ministers of the Gospel should make it the theme of their public discourses? Why may not the business of reformation be entrusted to the Satirist, the Poet, and the Moralist; to private conversation, and to the Religious Instruction of Parents? The answer to these questions is at hand. God has required Ministers to *cry aloud and spare not, to lift up their voices as a trumpet, and to shew his people their transgressions.* He has declared to Ministers, that if *they warn not the wicked of his way, the wicked shall die in his sins; but his blood He will require at their hands.* The point in debate must, I think, be allowed to be here finally settled; unless some argument can be devised to show, that a Minister is bound to make himself answerable for the blood of those sinners, to whom he preaches. Besides, the Satirist, the Poet, and the Moralist, in a

multitude of instances, have been enlisted on the side of Vice; and have endeavoured to stimulate, rather than repress, the evil under examination. Where they are not; how few persons read their books, compared with the number of those, who are present at the preaching of the Gospel! Probably two-thirds of a million of persons hear the Gospel preached, weekly, in *New-England*. Not one in a thousand of these, perhaps, has ever read a book, seriously exposing this unhappy part of the human character. Even where their books are read, and read with attention, they are little regarded, and produce little effect. The Desk possesses means of appalling, and overthrowing, vice, and upholding morality, which nothing else can boast. The Day, the Place, the Circumstances, of the Assembly; the Purposes, for which they are gathered; and the solemn Commission of JEHOVAH; furnish Ministers with advantages for this great end, unrivalled, and unexampled. Accordingly, their Office has been more efficacious in producing real reformation, than all the other means, employed by man. "The Pulpit," says a Poet of distinguished excellence and wisdom,

> "The Pulpit, when the sat'rist has at last,
> Strutting and vap'ring in an empty school,
> Spent all his force and made no proselyte,
> I say the Pulpit, in the sober use
> Of its legitimate, peculiar powers,
> Must stand acknowledg'd, while the world shall stand,
> The most important and effectual guard,
> Support, and ornament, of Virtue's cause."

With these things in view, I consider it as my own duty to bring this Subject into the Desk without hesitation; and to treat it in the same definite and earnest manner, which is demanded by the precepts of the Gospel. I shall make it my business, however, to treat it in such a manner, that, if any of my Audience shall entertain thoughts concerning it, forbidden by their Creator, it shall be their own fault, and not mine.

With these preliminary remarks, I proceed to observe,

I. *That this Command forbids all impure Thoughts.*

The proof of this I have already given, in our Saviour's comment on this precept.

Impure thoughts are the immediate, and only, sources of impure conversation, and an impure life. If the thoughts be cleansed; the man will be clean, of course.

There is scarcely a more dangerous employment, than the indulgence of a licentious Imagination. This is an evil, to which youths are peculiarly exposed. The peculiar strength of every passion, and the peculiar want of watchfulness, and self-restraint, render them an easy prey to every vice, which solicits admission. Still greater is the danger, when vice approaches under a form, especially alluring; and, at the same time, steals gradually, and

therefore insensibly, upon the mind. By all these evils, is the sin under consideration accompanied. It rises in the minds of the young, instinctively; surrounded with many allurements, and unaccompanied by that loathing and horror, with which the mind naturally regards vice of many other kinds. At the same time, the mind is prone to be utterly unconscious of any transgression, and of any danger. The imagination, thoughtless and unrestrained, wanders over the forbidden ground, often without thinking that it is forbidden; and has already been guilty of many and perilous transgressions, when it is scarcely aware of having transgressed at all. In this manner its attachment to these excursions continually gains strength. Continually are they repeated with more eagerness, and with more frequency. At length they become habitual: and scarcely any habit is stronger, or with less difficulty overcome. In every leisure season, the mind, if it will watch its own movements, will find itself roving without restraint, and often without being aware that it has begun to rove, on this interdicted ground; and will be astonished to perceive, after a sober computation, how great a part of all its thinking is made up of these licentious thoughts.

Most unhappily, aids, and allurements, to this licentious indulgence are never wanting. Genius, in every age, and in every country, has, to a great extent, prostituted its elevated powers for the deplorable purpose of seducing thoughtless minds to this sin. The unsuspecting imagination, ignorant of the dangers, which spread before it, has by this gay and fiery serpent, glittering with spots of gold, and painted with colours of enchantment, been allured to pluck the fruit of this forbidden tree, and hazard the death, denounced against the transgression. The numbers of the Poet, the delightful melody of Song, the fascination of the Chisel, and the spell of the Pencil, have been all volunteered in the service of Satan, for the moral destruction of unhappy man. To finish this work of malignity, the Stage has lent all its splendid apparatus of mischief; the Shop been converted into a show-box of temptations; and its owner into a pander of iniquity. Feeble, erratic, and giddy, as the mind of man is in its nature; prepared to welcome temptation, and to hail every passing sin; can we wonder, that it should yield to this formidable train of seducers?

To a virtuous mind scarcely any possession is of more value, or more productive of enjoyment or safety, than a chastened Imagination, regularly subjected to the control of the Conscience. Wherever this faculty is under this control, the mind has achieved a power of keeping temptation at a distance, of resisting it when approaching, and of overcoming it when invading, attainable in no other manner. Its path towards heaven becomes, therefore, comparatively unobstructed, easy, and secure. Sin *does* not *easily beset it:* and its moral improvement, while it is on the one hand undisturbed, is on the other rapid and delightful.

II. *This Command forbids all licentious Words, of the same nature.*

Impure thoughts beget impure words; and impure words, in their turn, generate, enhance, and multiply, impure thoughts. This retro-active influence of the tongue upon the heart, by means of which, sinful conversation becomes the means of producing sinful thoughts, I have had occasion to explain at large in a former discourse. It will, therefore, be unnecessary to dwell upon it here. No serious observer of human life can doubt, that by our own language, as well as that of others, whenever it is impure, impure thoughts are awakened; a licentious imagination set on fire; and licentious designs, which otherwise would never have entered the mind, called up into existence, and execution.

In this employment, also, our fellow-men unite with us in the strange, and melancholy, purpose of mutual corruption. All the dangers and mischiefs, all the temptations and sins, presented to each other by evil companions, are to be found here. Here, *wicked men and seducers wax worse and worse; deceiving, and being deceived;* mutually seducing, and being seduced.

The only safety, with respect to this part of the subject in hand, is found in an exact conformity to the very forcible precept of St. Paul: *But filthiness, foolish talking and jesting, let it not be so much as named among you.* The original words are αισχροτης, *obscenity;* μωρολογια, *impure scurrility;* and ευτραπελια, when used in a bad sense, as here, answering to *double entendres*, or seemingly *decent speeches with double meanings.* Of all these the Apostle says not, *Let them not be used, but, let them not be so much as named among you, as becometh saints.* Let no foundation be furnished by your conversation even for mentioning it as a fact, that such language has ever been uttered by you. For, no conversation, beside that, which is thus pure, can become your character as Christians. See Eph. v. 3, 4. Strict and virtuous delicacy in our language is not only indispensable to decency, and dignity, of character, but to all purity of heart, and all excellency of life.

III. *This Command forbids all licentious Conduct of this nature.*

As this position will not be questioned; and as this conduct, in every form, is prohibited, elsewhere, in a multitude of Scriptural passages; I shall spare myself the labour of proof; and shall proceed to suggest *several Reasons for our obedience to this precept;* or, what is the same thing, to mention, *several Evils arising from disobedience.*

1. *The Licentious Conduct, forbidden by this precept, discourages, and prevents Marriage.*

This discouragement, and prevention, regularly take place in exact proportion to the prevalence of the conduct; and are therefore chargeable upon it, whenever, and wherever, and however, it exists.

The innumerable, and immense, blessings of the Marriage Institution have been summarily recited in the preceding discourse. They are the blessings, which keep the Moral World in being, and secure it from an untimely, and most terrible, dissolution. They are the blessings, without which life, in instances literally innumerable, would be blasted in the bud; without which, when it escaped this premature destruction, its continuance would prove a curse; without which, Natural affection, and amiableness, would not exist; without which, domestic Education would be extinct; Industry and Economy never begin; and man be left to the precarious subsistence of a savage. But for this Institution, Learning, Knowledge, and Refinement, would expire; Government sink in the gulf of Anarchy; and Religion, hunted from the habitations of men, hasten back to her native heavens. Man, in the mean time, stripped of all that is respectable, amiable, or hopeful, in his character, and degraded to all that is odious, brutal, and desperate, would prowl in solitudes and deserts, to satisfy his rage and hunger. The correspondence between heaven and earth would cease; and the celestial inhabitants would no longer expect, nor find, new accessions to their happy society from this miserable world.

To all these evils every lewd man directly contributes. Were his principles, and practices, adopted universally by his fellowmen; all these evils would universally prevail. That they do not actually thus prevail is, in no sense, owing to him. To the utmost of his power he labours to introduce them all.

2. *This Conduct, in almost all cases, presupposes Seduction.* Seduction, in its very nature, involves fraud of the worst kind. It is probably always accomplished by means of the most solemn promises, and often with oaths still more solemn. Both the promises and oaths, however, are violated in a manner, supremely profligate and shameful. The object, to which they are directed, is base, malignant, and treacherous, in the extreme; and the manner, in which it is prosecuted, is marked with the same treachery and baseness. He, who can coolly adopt it, has put off the character of a man, and put on that of a fiend; and, with the spirit of a fiend alone, he pursues, and accomplishes, the infernal purpose. The ruin sought, and achieved, is immense. It is not the filching of property. It is not the burning of a house. It is not the deprivation of liberty. It is not the destruction of life. The Seducer plunders the wretched victim of character, morals, happiness, hope, and heaven; enthrals her in the eternal bondage of sin; consumes her beyond the grave in endless fire; and murders her soul with an ever-living death. With the same comprehensive, and terrible malignity, he destroys himself; calls down upon his own head the vengeance of that Almighty Hand, which will suffer no sinner to escape; and awakens the terrors of that undying conscience, which will enhance even the agonies of perdition.

All this is perpetrated, in the mean time, under strong professions of peculiar affection; with the persuasive language of tenderness; and with the smiles of gentleness and complacency. For, the Seducer

" Can smile, and smile, and be a villain."

3. *It brings Incomprehensible Wretchedness upon the devoted object.*

No human being can support the pressure of infamy; a degradation below the level of mankind; and the envenomed stings of reproach, sharpened by a guilty conscience. I well know, that Philosophy prates, and vapours, on topics of this nature, with a proud self-complacency; and an ostentatious display of patience, fortitude, and serenity. But I also well know, that Philosophy is, in these respects, a mere pretender; a bully, and not a hero. Philosophy never furnished, and never will furnish, its Catalogue of Martyrs. All its votaries, like *Voltaire*, intend only to rule, and triumph; not to suffer, nor even to submit. As cool and parading reflections on subjects of a calamitous nature are uttered in the peace of the closet; the possession of ease and safety; the conviction of acknowledged reputation; and the enjoyment of friends, comforts, and hopes; Philosophy rarely encounters real sufferings. Her hardihood is all premature; and is all shown in telling the world what she would do, and what others ought to do; and not in the history of what she has done.

The excruciating anguish, to which the miserable female victim is reduced, is dreadfully exemplified in the unnatural and enormous wickedness, to which she is driven in the desertion, and the consequent destruction, of her helpless offspring. *Can a woman forget her sucking child; that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?* is a question which points out the strongest affection, the highest tenderness of human nature; the attachment, which outruns, survives, and triumphs over, every other. To this question, the exposure to a merciless sky, the drowning, the strangling, the smothering, of illegitimate children, returns a terrible and excruciating answer. What must be the agonies of despondence, and degradation, which can force the susceptible heart of a female parent to the contrivance, and execution, of a design like this? Yet such is the dreadful catastrophe of the wickedness in question. It is worse than trifling, for the author of all these evils to allege, that this catastrophe is neither contrived, nor accomplished, by himself. They are all, and all are known by him to be, the frequent, as well as natural, consequences of this iniquity. They are chargeable to him, therefore, as the legitimate results of his own conduct: results, which by every obligation, human and divine, he was bound to foresee, and prevent. Both the Murder itself, and the miseries which give birth to it, are stains of that crimson guilt, in which he is so deeply dyed.

4. *This Licentious Character soon becomes Habitual.*

To a person, moderately acquainted with human conduct, an attempt to prove this assertion would be mere trifling. All transgressions of this cast soon become fixed, obstinate, and irreclaimable. The world teems with evidence of this humiliating position; and the whole progress of time has daily accumulated a mountainous mass of facts, evincing its certainty in a more and more humiliating manner.

Of these the most humiliating and dreadful collection is found in those baleful tenements of Prostitution, and Profligacy, which deform, so far as my information extends, every populous City on the Globe; and stand publicly as the gateway to Hell; opening to their miserable inhabitants a broad and beaten road to perdition. Into these deplorable mansions, the polluted female, cast off by mankind as an outlaw from human society, torn even from the side of Natural affection, and parental mercy, betrayed by the villany of a second *Judas*, and hurried by shame, remorse, and anguish, enters, never to escape. Here, from the first moment, she closes her eyes upon friends, kindness, and compassion; takes her final farewell of earthly comfort; and sees with a dying eye, the last glimmerings of hope go out in eternal night. Here, she bids an everlasting adieu to the Sabbath, the House, and the Word, of God. To her, the calls of Mercy are made no more. To her, the Voice of the Redeemer sounds no more. The Spirit of Truth cannot be supposed to enter the haunts of sin and death; nor to shed the dew of life upon these voluntary victims of corruption, by whom they are inhabited. Immortal life here becomes extinct. Hither the "*hope*" of heaven "*never comes, that comes to all:*" and the wretched throng embosomed by these baleful walls, enter upon their perdition on this side of the grave.

Who, that is not lost to candour, and buried in misanthropy, could believe, unless he were forced to believe, that princes, and other rulers of mankind, have taxed, and licensed, these houses of ruin; and that, in countries where the Gospel beams, and the voice of salvation is heard in the streets? Who could believe, that sin would be thus bartered in the market; and damnation be holden up, as a commodity, for bargain and sale; that the destruction of the human soul would be publicly announced, granted, and authorized, as a privilege; and that patents would be made out, signed, and sealed, for populating more extensively the World of wo?

In the mean time, it is ever to be remembered, that the betrayer accompanies, to the same dreadful end, the victim of his treachery. *None, who go into* these outer chambers of perdition, *turn again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.*

5. *This Conduct destroys all Moral Principle.* "However it be accounted for," says *Dr. Paley*, "the criminal commerce of the sexes corrupts, and depraves, the mind, and moral character, more

than any single species of vice whatsoever. That ready perception of guilt, that prompt and decisive resolution against it, which constitutes a virtuous character, is seldom found in persons, addicted to these indulgences. They prepare an easy admission for every sin, that seeks it; are in low life, usually the first stage in men's progress to the most desperate villanies; and, in high life, to that lamented dissoluteness of principle, which manifests itself in a profligacy of public conduct, and a contempt of the obligations of religion and moral probity."

What is here asserted by this very able writer, forced itself upon my mind, many years before I saw the Work, containing these observations, as a strong, and prominent, feature in the character of man. These very declarations I have long since seen amply verified in living examples. This progress towards abandonment cannot be very easily described, much less thoroughly explained, except in a detailed account of the subject. Such an account cannot here be given. Yet the following observations will, if I mistake not, contribute to illustrate the point in question.

Almost all persons, perhaps all, derive from early instruction, and habituation, a greater or less degree of conscientiousness; a reverence for God; a sense of accountableness; a fixed expectation of future rewards, and punishments; a veneration for Truth, and Justice; and an established conviction of the excellence of kindness. These, united, constitute that temperament of mind, on which Evangelical Virtue is usually, as well as happily, grafted; and to exterminate them, is to destroy what is here meant by all moral principle.

Persons, who commit the crimes, which form the principal subject of this discourse, always commit them in secret. After they are committed, the same secrecy is indispensable to the safety of the perpetrators. There must be, however, there are unavoidably, some persons, who, at times, and in one manner and another, become acquainted with the wickedness. These must be engaged, at all events, to conceal what they know. To effectuate this purpose, the perpetrators are often driven to employ the grossest corruption, and the basest and most profligate measures. Agents, also, are often absolutely necessary to the successful accomplishment of the crimes themselves. None, but abandoned men, can become such agents; and none, but abandoned measures, can be employed with respect to their agency. As the principal criminal makes progress in this iniquity; such persons become more and more necessary to him, and familiar with him: and as, during his progress, he renders himself an object of detestation to all decent society; these profligates soon become his only companions, and these measures his only conduct. He, who devotes himself to such companions, and such conduct, will always debase and corrupt his

own mind faster than he is aware; and, with an unexpected rapidity in guilt, will very soon become a mere profligate.

Nor will he be less rapidly corrupted by the innumerable vile expedients, base fetches, treacherous plans, abominable briberies, and foul perjuries, to which he resorts for the successful perpetration of his villanous designs. To all these must be added the putrefactive influence of impurity itself; which, as the pestilence through the body, diffuses mortification and rottenness throughout the soul; and converts it into a mere mass of death and corruption.

Conformably to these observations, we see, in the ordinary course of things, that impurity manures, and waters, every other growth of sin. Wherever it prevails, all crimes become gross, rank, and premature. Impiety, blasphemy, treachery, drunkenness, perjury, and murder, flourish around it. How justly then, as well as how solemnly, did the Divine Writer declare, concerning the strange woman, *Her house is the way to hell; going down to the chambers of death.*

6. *Whenever this conduct assumes the flagrant character of Adultery, it involves a numerous and dreadful train of additional evils.*

It involves the most open and gross violation of the Marriage Covenant; and exposes the guilty person, therefore, to the peculiar wrath of that tremendous Being, invoked as a witness of it; and incomprehensibly, as well as most impudently, affronted by the violation.

It accomplishes the greatest injury, which the innocent party to that covenant can receive, on this side of the Grave. This injury is formed of a vast combination of sufferings, reaching every important interest in this world, always; and, often, in the world to come; exquisitely keen and poignant, piercing the very seat of thought, and sense, and feeling, and awakening in long succession throes of agony and despair. The husband, for example, is forced to behold his wife, once and alway beloved beyond expression, not less affectionate than beloved, and hitherto untarnished even with suspicion, corrupted by fraud, circumvention, and villany; seduced from truth, virtue, and hope; and voluntarily consigned to irretrievable ruin. His prospects of enjoyment, and even of comfort, in the present world, are overcast with the blackness of darkness. Life, to him, is changed into a lingering death. His house is turned into an empty dreary cavern. Himself is widowed. His children are orphans; not by the righteous providence of God; but by the murderous villany of man. Clouded with wo, and hung round with despair, his soul becomes a charnel-house, where life, and peace, and comfort, have expired; a tomb, dark and hollow, covering the remains of departed enjoyment, and opening no more to the entrance of the living.

It involves injuries to the children, which numbers cannot calculate, and which the tongue cannot describe. The hand of villany has robbed of all their peculiar blessings; the blessings of maternal care and tenderness; the rich blessings of maternal instruction and government; the delightful and most persuasive blessings of maternal example; the exalted privilege of united parental prayers; and the exquisite enjoyments of a peaceful, harmonious, and happy fireside; once exquisitely happy, but now to be happy no more.

To this most affecting and pitiable train of mourners, a numerous and additional train of friends unite themselves, to deplore the common wo. A singular, an agonizing, procession is formed, at the funeral of departed virtue. Tears stream, which no hand can wipe away. Groans ascend, which no comforter can charm to peace. Bosoms heave with anguish, which all the balm of Gilead cannot sooth. The object of lamentation is gone for ever; and all that remains is a mass of living death, soon to be buried in the eternal grave.

7. *This wickedness, when it becomes extensive, overspreads a Country with final ruin.*

It is the nature of this evil, not only to become greater, and greater, in individuals, but to extend continually, also, to greater, and greater numbers of individuals. The corruption of *Sodom, and the* neighbouring *cities of the plain*, was rapid, and complete. Within a short period after they were built, ten righteous persons could not be found in them all. What was true of these cities, is true of others in similar circumstances. To the *Israelites* before they entered into *Canaan*, God prescribed a long series of laws, requiring absolute purity of conduct; prohibiting in the most solemn manner, lewdness of every kind; and enacting against it the most dreadful penalties. *Do not*, said Jehovah, *prostitute thy daughter; lest the land become full of wickedness. Ye shall not commit any of these abominations, that the land spew not you out, also, when ye defile it, as it spewed out the nations that were before you.* In the sight of God, therefore, this sin is peculiarly the source of corruption to a land; a source whence *it becomes full of wickedness;* and vomits out its inhabitants, as being unable to bear them. Those who practise it, and the nation, in which the practice prevails, are, he declares, abhorred by him, and shall be finally destroyed. *For whosoever*, saith he, *shall commit any of these abominations, that soul shall be cut off from his people.*

As crimes of this nature become less and less unfrequent: they become less and less scandalous; and by all, who are inclined to perpetrate them, are esteemed less and less sinful. Of course they are regarded with decreasing reluctance and horror. The father practises them; and with his example corrupts his son. The husband in the same manner corrupts his wife; the brother his brother; the friend his friend; and the neighbour his neighbour.

Soon the Brothel raises its polluted walls; and becomes a seminary of Satan, where crimes are provided; taught; perpetrated; multiplied without number, and beyond degree; and, to a great extent, concealed from the public eye. To one of these caverns of darkness and death, another succeeds, and another; until the city, and ultimately the whole land, becomes one vast *Sodom*. Lost to every thought of reformation, and to every feeling of Conscience; *an astonishment, and a hissing, to mankind;* a reprobate of Heaven; it invokes upon the heads of its putrid inhabitants a new tempest of fire and brimstone. Morals, life, and hope, to such a community, have expired. They breathe, indeed, and move, and act; and to the careless eye appear as living beings. But the life is merely a counterfeit. They are only a host of moving corpses; an assembly of the dead, destined to no future resurrection. Disturbed and restless spectres, they haunt the surface of the earth in material forms, filling the sober and contemplative mind with alarm and horror; until they finally disappear, and hurry through the gloomy mansions of the grave to everlasting WO.

SERMON CXXI.

SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.—POLYGAMY.—DIVORCE.

MATTHEW xix. 3—11 —*The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered, and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He, which made them at the beginning, made them male and female; and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder They say unto him. Why did Moses, then, command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her, which is put away, doth commit adultery. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife; it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying; save they, to whom it is given.*

THE next violation of the Seventh Command, which I shall think it necessary to examine at large in this system, is *Divorce*.

Were I delivering a formal course of Ethical Lectures; I should feel myself obliged to extend the same examination to *Polygamy*. As a practical subject in this Country, it demands, indeed, little consideration. But from its inherent importance, and its extensive prevalence in the world; and still more from the fact, that it has been either partially, or wholly, defended by some grave men; it deserves to become a subject of serious consideration. Thinking men ought on such a subject to have their opinions settled. For these reasons, although I cannot expiate, I feel myself bound to make a few observations upon it in a summary manner.

Polygamy is unlawful, because God in the original Institution of Marriage confines it to the union of one man with one woman. For this cause, said *He, who created them male and female, shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh. Whom God, therefore, hath joined together, let not man put asunder.* God hath joined *two*. This is the only Authority, under which Marriage lawfully exists. Polygamy is, therefore, a violation of the Institution of God.

Polygamy appears to be directly forbidden in the Mosaic Law. Lev. xviii. 18. *Thou shalt not take a wife to her Sister, to vex her, in her life time:* or, as it is in the Margin, *Thou shalt not take one wife to another.* The words "a wife to her sister," *Dr. Edwards* observes, are found in the Hebrew, if I remember right, eight times. In every other passage, except that just quoted, they refer to inanimate objects: such as *the wings of the Cherubim, Tenons,*

Mortices, &c. They seem to denote, principally, the exact likeness of one thing to another; and here forbid, as the margin expresses it, *the taking of one wife to another in her life time.*

Polygamy is forbidden in the Prophecy of Malachi. The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Mal. ii. 14, 15.

The prophet, in this passage, although speaking of all the wives in the nation of *Israel, yet mentions the word in the singular number only.* Of the union of one husband with one wife he declares God to have been witness; and thus plainly indicates, that this union lawfully extended to no more. In the second verse quoted, he asks, *Did He not make one?* That is, *one wife*, when *he had the residue of the Spirit*, and could with the same ease have created many, if he had pleased. *And wherefore one?* To this question he answers, *That he might seek a godly seed.* In other words, he created one man and one woman, and united them, and them only, in the Marriage Institution; because one husband and one wife, thus united, would by religious education, and example, promote piety in their offspring. This is an implicit, but clear and decisive, declaration, that in a state of Polygamy, pious children would very rarely be found. Polygamy, therefore, cannot be lawful; as being hostile to the design of God in this Institution, and to the highest interest of mankind.

Polygamy is expressly forbidden in the Text. Here, the man, who puts away his wife, and marries another, is declared to commit adultery. In what does this adultery consist? Certainly not in putting away the former wife. A man may obviously leave his wife, or a woman her husband, and yet neither of them be at all guilty of this sin. *The adultery*, then, *consists in the fact, that the man marries a second wife, while the first is living.* But this is always done in Polygamy. Polygamy is, therefore, a continued state of Adultery.

There is not a passage in the Scriptures, in which the Institution of Marriage, or the relation which it creates, is spoken of in the form, either of doctrine, or precept, which gives even a remote hint of the lawful union of more than two persons. Husband and Wife are the terms, invariably used in every case of this nature.

A Bishop and a Deacon, in an age, when Polygamy was common, are expressly required, each, to be a husband of one wife. Yet *Marriage is* declared to be *honourable in all.* If Polygamy, then, were at all the marriage spoken of, or the Scriptural Marriage; it would be honourable, and therefore becoming, and proper, in Bishops and Deacons; and no reason appears for this restriction on them, any more than on other men.

The only instance of Polygamy, recorded in the Scriptures, during the first two thousand years after the Institution of Marriage, was that of Lamech; and this appears to have been considered by himself, and those around him, as sinful. *Noah* and his three sons, had but one wife each.

All the instances of Polygamy of which the history is given in the Scriptures, to any extent, were sources of many and bitter calamities, both to the Parents and Children.

Equally hostile to this practice is *the state of facts.*

The numbers of the sexes, born, and living to adult years, in all nations and ages, have been so nearly equal, as to indicate plainly the will of the Author of our being, that one man and one woman, only, were to be united as parties in Marriage. This equality is, indeed, denied by *Mr. Bruce*, with respect to *Syria* and *Arabia;* and with no small appearance of being founded on evidence. But when I remember, that it is a contradiction to the law of our nature in all ages, and in all other places; that the fact is mentioned by no ancient or modern historian; that *Mr. Bruce*, so far as my information extends, is the only traveller who has mentioned it; particularly, that it escaped the observations of *Shaw*, *Russel*, *Maundrel*, and especially *Nieburh;* I cannot help believing, that this respectable Writer was misled in his apprehensions. It ought to be added, that the knowledge, in question, must, if, attained at all, be from the existing state of Society in those countries attained with extreme difficulty, and accompanied with not a little uncertainty. This story is also expressly contradicted by Lord *Valentia*, who has lately travelled in Arabia.

Polygamy is unfriendly to population.

When the World was to be replenished, under an immediate command of God, with human beings; a single pair was chosen to be the means of accomplishing this design.

When the same design was, under the same command, to be accomplished anew; God chose the three sons of *Noah*, and their three wives, as the proper means of fulfilling it.

The *Turks* are Polygamists. They possess all the power, almost all the wealth, and therefore almost all the means of subsistence, found in their empire. Yet they are few in number, compared with the *Greeks;* who marry but one wife, and who, subjected to iron bondage under the despotism of these hard masters, are continually impoverished, and plundered of a precarious subsistence, by their rapacious hands.

Polygamy degrades from their proper rank, privileges, and enjoyments, to an almost animal level, one half of the human race. This enormous injustice no consideration can excuse, or palliate.

Polygamy has regularly introduced domestic broils of the most bitter kind, terminating in the most fatal manner, and involving in their deplorable consequences both the Parents and the Children.

Of this truth complete proofs are found in the few historical accounts, which have reached us, of the *Turkish* and *Persian* royal families.

These considerations, if I mistake not, amply prove, that *Polygamy is unlawful, and a direct violation of the Seventh Command.*

I shall now proceed to consider the proper subject of the Text. This I shall introduce under the following General Observation, as directly expressing the principal doctrine in the Text;

That Divorces, for any other cause, except Incontinence, are unlawful.

This important Scriptural Truth I shall endeavour to support by arguments, derived both from *Scripture*, and *Reason.*

From the Scriptures, I allege,

1. *That Marriage is a Divine Institution; and is, therefore, unalterable by Man.*

That Marriage is a Divine Institution has, I apprehend, been made abundantly evident from several parts of this passage, examined in the Discourse on the Origin of Marriage. It was there proved, if I mistake not, that God has really joined together every lawfully married pair among the children of *Adam.* That *what God hath* thus *joined* by his Infinite Authority, *man cannot* lawfully *put asunder*, needs no illustration. God has made the *twain one.* Man cannot make them twain again, unless with the evident permission of God.

It is to be observed here, that *the translation* exactly expresses the meaning of *the original* in this part of the text: *Let not man put asunder.* The Greek word is ανθρωπος, without the article: the most absolute, and unlimited, expression, in that language, to denote *man universally, without any respect to age, sex, or condition.* The prohibition, therefore, is not, *that the husband*, as among the *Jews*, *Greeks*, and others; nor that *a judicial tribunal*, as among ourselves; nor that *a legislature*, as in some other Communities; may not sunder this union; but that *Man, in no condition, place, or time; Man, possessed of no authority whatever; may sunder this union*, without an express permission from God.

2. *I allege as a decisive argument, the Guilt, which is directly charged by Christ upon all the parties in the Divorce, and the consequent Marriages.*

In the Text, Christ declares, that the man, who divorces his wife, and marries another, and the man, who marries the divorced wife, are both guilty of adultery in this transaction. The same crime, in Matth. v. 32, is charged upon the divorced woman. It will not be questioned, that the woman, who marries the divorced husband, is guilty in exactly the same manner. Neither of these Marriages, therefore, can possibly take place, without involving the crime of adultery in both the married parties. Consequently, a Divorce, except for Incontinence, is here for ever barred. A

Divorce professedly sets the parties free; so that they may lawfully marry again. But it is plain from these observations, that they cannot be thus set free, and can never lawfully marry again. Whatever husbands, judges, or legislators, may think, or declare, or do; all these parties will by their subsequent Marriages become guilty of adultery. Thus Christ has pronounced; and thus He certainly will pronounce at the final day.

It is here to be remarked, that this decision of Christ was totally contrary to the views, entertained by his Apostles. This they directly declare in the following words: *If the case of the man be so with his wife; it is not good to marry.* Christ, however, does not qualify, nor soften, the decision at all. On the contrary, he leaves it exactly where he had left it before. *All men*, he replies, *cannot receive this saying; save they, to whom it is given;* and again; *He, that is able to receive it, let him receive it.*

3. *St. Paul has determined the same point anew; and in the most explicit manner conceivable.*

Unto the married I command; yet not I, but the Lord; Let not the wife depart: χωρισθηναι, be separated; that is, by a divorce; voluntarily accomplished by herself; *from her husband;* this being the only command, which could be addressed to the wife with any meaning. *But and if she depart;* Εαν δε και χωρισθη; *But even if she be separated;* that is, by means of a divorce, accomplished by him; *let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife;* και ανδρα γυναικα μη αφιεναι, *and I also command the husband not to put away his wife.* This also is a part of the Command, given by Christ in the Text; and is quoted, not as I apprehend from the Text itself, which it is very possible *St. Paul*, at this time, may not have seen; but from that immediate Revelation, which this Apostle received of the Gospel from the mouth of Christ.

We have here the decision of Christ concerning this subject recited, and declared to be *his* decision by *St. Paul;* and therefore know the manner in which this command of our Saviour was understood by an inspired commentator. The same precept is here given in all its latitude. A Divorce, on both sides, is absolutely prohibited; and, in case of a Divorce, the injured party, the person divorced, is forbidden expressly, and absolutely, to marry again.

The Apostle then goes on, *But to the rest:* that is, to those whose cases were not contemplated by the command of Christ, because they had not existed, when that command was given; *But to the rest I command, not the Lord. If any Brother*, that is, a Christian, *hath a wife, who is an infidel, and she be well pleased to dwell with him; let him not put her away: and, if any woman*, that is, any Christian woman, *hath an husband, who is an infidel, and he be well pleased to dwell with her; let her not put him away.*

The case here mentioned by the Apostle was a new one. While Christ was on earth, there were no Christians, who had infidel, that is heathen, husbands, or wives. For the peculiar circumstances of persons, thus situated, Christ had, therefore, made no direct, explicit provision. Doubts concerning the proper conduct of such persons, with regard to the duties of the married state, appear, evidently, to have arisen in the Church of *Corinth*. The great evil, felt by these Christians, concerning which they clearly appear to me to have written to *St. Paul* for his directions, seems to have consisted in *these two things: the difficulties, to which they were subjected by their infidel husbands and wives, with respect to their attendance on the Ordinances of the Gospel;* and *their fears, lest their children, having one infidel parent, should, on account of this fact, be excluded from the Christian Church, and denied the Ordinance of Baptism.* The latter of these evils the Apostle removes, together with the apprehensions of it, in the following verse. *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife; and the unbelieving wife by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.* That is, the unbelieving party in the marriage-state is, by means of this connexion with the believing party, sanctified, in such a sense, that the children are not put out of the covenant, but may be offered up to God in Baptism.

The former of these difficulties the Apostle obviates in the verse, next succeeding. *But if the unbelieving depart; let him depart.* Ει δε απιστος χωριζεται, χωριζεσθω. If the infidel separate himself, let him separate himself. *A brother, or a sister, is not in bondage in such things. But God hath called us to peace.* The Apostle, it is to be remembered, had no control over the Heathen. He says therefore, *If the Infidel separate himself; let him separate himself.* This is a case, over which I have no control; in which you can obtain no relief; and to which you are, therefore, bound to submit with patience and resignation. But a Brother, or Sister, is under no obligation to follow the Infidel Party; whatever may be thought concerning the extent of the marriage-vow; nor to forsake the Worship of God, or its Ordinances; nor to consent, that his or her children should be withdrawn from the privileges of religion. Such a case involves the deepest bondage; and to this bondage no Christian brother, or sister, is subjected. The Verb, here rendered *is in bondage*, is δεδουλωται; literally rendered *hath been reduced to the deepest servitude.* The servitude, intended by the Apostle, is, in my apprehension, unquestionably *the submission of a Christian to an infidel husband, or wife, so hostile to the Christian Religion, as to refuse to continue in the marriage relation, and perform the duties involved in it, unless the Christian partner will consent to give up the privilege of the Gospel.* This would, indeed, be a deplorable bondage; and

deserving of being expressed by the strong term, which St. Paul has selected.

Several very respectable Commentators, and among them *Poole*, *Doddridge*, and *Macknight*, have, I am aware, supposed this bondage to consist in the obligation, under which the Christian party might be imagined to lie, to continue still unmarried. I acknowledge myself surprised at this explanation, and at the reasons, by which it is professedly supported. *Dr. Macknight*, after alleging that this is the Apostle's meaning, declares, that his decision is just; *because there is no reason, why the innocent party, through the fault of the guilty party, should be exposed to the danger of committing adultery.*

Poole says, "*Such a person hath broken the bond of marriage; and Christians are not under bondage, by the laws of God, to keep themselves unmarried, on account of the perverseness of such parties to the marriage covenant.*"

To this opinion, and these reasons, I answer, that *Christ has expressly forbidden the divorced wife, however innocent, to marry again; and has declared, that if she does marry, she will be an adulteress.* Certainly, the *divorced wife* may be, and often is, as innocent, as the *deserted wife;* and in the nature of the case is as probably innocent. With equal justice, then, may it be said in this case, as in the case of the deserted wife, that there is no reason, why the innocent party, through *the fault of the guilty party, should be exposed to commit adultery.*

Again. *The divorced wife is more injured than the deserted wife.* She is not only deprived of all the privileges, and blessings, lost by the deserted wife, but of many more. She is forced by violence from her husband, her children, and her home. She is turned out with disgrace; as a woman, with whom her husband could not continue to live; and usually with little provision, made for her subsistence. The wife, who is deserted, is on the contrary, almost always left in the possession of her house, her children, her character, and tolerable means of subsistence for herself and her family. She may be, and most usually is, deserted for reasons, involving no disgrace to her. Her husband may have contracted an unwarrantable attachment for another object; indulged a spirit of roving, and adventure; disgraced himself by his previous conduct; or fled from some exposure to punishment for some crime, or from creditors, whom he cannot, or will not, pay. Accordingly, deserted wives are probably as generally persons of good reputation, as others of their sex. On all these accounts, the case of the divorced wife is incomparably harder, than that of the deserted wife. Can it be possible, that Christ has rescued the deserted wife from this deepest bondage; as these writers understand it; and have left the divorced wife, amid so many more, and severer, hardships, yet equally innocent, to suffer the whole extent of this thraldom?

Mr. Poole says, the deserter hath broken the bond of Marriage, and thus released the deserted party from the laws of God concerning it; so far as they require abstinence from Marriage.

I answer: The Divorcer has broken this bond still more violently: and made the infraction more complete. Of course, he has, according to this scheme, in a higher degree made it lawful for the divorced wife to marry again. This reasoning, therefore, equally with that of *Dr. Macknight*, makes the decision of Christ both unwise, and unjust.

Besides, this scheme renders the precept concerning Divorce entirely fruitless. The man, who wishes to divorce his wife, is by this scheme entirely released from all the trouble and expense, and generally also from the scandal, usually attendant upon this iniquitous proceeding. He cannot, indeed, free himself from the sin of deserting his wife, and all those sins which are involved in it. But he may give his wife the opportunity of marrying, innocently, another husband. When this is done; he himself may, for aught that appears, marry innocently another wife. Thus, by undergoing an absence of three years, the time *here* limited for this object, he may without any peculiar scandal, and without the sin of adultery, accomplish the very object, aimed at in cases of this nature by licentious men: viz. a second marriage.

St. Paul in the mean time, has in this very chapter determined the point in question against these Commentators. *Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord; Let not the wife be separated from her husband. But, even if she be separated, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband.* The word, here translated *separated*, is the same which is used in the 15th verse; the subject of this inquiry. Is it credible, that an inspired man should at all, or that any man of sober sense should within the compass of five sentences, give two contradictory precepts concerning any subject; especially a subject of this importance? Peculiarly it is incredible, that *St. Paul*, immediately after reciting a solemn command of Christ, and declaring it to be *his*, should subjoin a contradictory command.

To me it appears equally incredible, that an Apostle should designate the situation, in which Christ had placed an innocently divorced woman, innocently I mean, on her part, by the word δεδεσλωται; and thus style it *the deepest bondage*. It is, I think, impossible, that the spirit of God should call any state produced by obedience to the commands of Christ, by the name of *bondage*; and still more evidently impossible, that he should denote it by a name, expressing *the most suffering and disgraceful bondage*. How can such an appellation consist with that phraseology, in which *the whole situation of Christians* is by the same Spirit styled *the glorious liberty of the Sons of God?* If the deserted wife is brought under this bondage, by being denied the liberty

of marrying again ; the divorced wife is, by the same denial, brought under this bondage in a still more distressing degree. Yet to this situation she is reduced by the express command of Christ.

Finally. *St. Paul* himself has clearly shown, that this was not his meaning, by the words immediately following the passage in question. *But God hath called us to peace. For how knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?* Surely the second marriage, contended for, cannot ordinarily be the means of *the peace* here mentioned: that is, peace or concord between the divorced pair. Much more is it improbable, that a husband, or a wife, should *by means of second marriages* become instruments of salvation to each other. This desirable event may be fairly hoped for, if they continue unmarried, from their future reconciliation to each other: but cannot be even remotely hoped for from their divorce, and their consequent final separation.

Should it be said, that *the case of the deserted wife is a hard one:* I acknowledge it. The sins, both of ourselves and others, create none but hard cases. That of the divorced wife is still harder. The reason, why this law is established, is undoubtedly found in *the immense importance of the Marriage Institution.* It is incomparably better, that individuals should suffer, than that an Institution, which is the basis of all human good, should be shaken, or endangered.

I have dwelt thus minutely on this abused passage, because it is the strong hold of those, with whom I am contending. If they cannot find support for their opinions *here;* they can find it no where. That they cannot find it here has, I trust, been shown beyond a reasonable doubt.

What the Scriptures teach us concerning the subject of divorce, *is abundantly established by Reason.* This I shall attempt to evince in the following Observations.

It is acknowledged by the Advocates for this system, that *the Scriptures do indeed forbid a divorce for any other reason, beside Incontinence, or something equivalent.* The things, which they consider as equivalent, are *Obstinate Desertion, Gross Personal Abuse, Incompatibility of Temper, Confirmed Madness,* &c. I do not intend, that they are all agreed with respect to this class of things; but that some or other of these they actually propose as reasons for divorce equivalent to Incontinence.

Concerning this subject I observe,

1. *That there is no such thing, as an Equivalent in this case.*

No crime, no injury, affects the happiness of wedlock, or wounds so deeply every domestic interest. None so entirely terminates every enjoyment, and every hope, as the crime, mentioned by our Saviour. As this is sufficiently evident from the preceding discourse; it would be useless to spend time in considering it any

farther. I shall only observe, therefore, that Incontinence not only destroys connubial happiness, and hopes; but annihilates, so far as it extends, the very Institution, from which they spring.

2. *What is at least equally important, the Scriptures have no where mentioned any thing as an equivalent.*

It must, I think, be admitted without a question, that, if the Divine Lawgiver had intended, that any thing should be considered, in the case in hand, as an equivalent to Incontinence, He certainly, would have expressly mentioned it. Certainly, He must, at least, be supposed to have hinted it, or alluded to it, in some manner or other. But this He has not done. Unanswerably, then, it was no part of his intentions. It cannot, therefore, be assumed as such by us. We are here, as well as in other cases, bound absolutely to see, that we *add not to his words, lest he reprove us, and we be found liars.* I know of no pretence, that there is any thing of this nature found in the Scriptures, except the desertion, mentioned in the passage, which has been so long the theme of discussion: and this, it is believed, has been clearly shown to have not even the remotest reference to the subject now under consideration. But,

3. *It is urged, that the evils, involved in the things, here mentioned as equivalents, are intolerable; and demand relief from human jurisprudence.*

To this I answer,

In the first place, *That, although these evils were much greater than they are in fact; and I acknowledged them to be very great; yet, if God has not thought proper to allow us, and still more if He has forbidden us, to escape from them in the manner proposed, they must be alleged in vain as arguments for Divorce.*

The Government of his creatures belongs only to God: and nothing but impiety can induce us to interfere with either the modes, or the principles, of his administration. If He has permitted Divorce on either of these grounds; it is lawful. If He has not; however numerous, or great, may be the evils which we suffer, they will not contribute at all towards rendering it lawful.

Secondly. *All these evils may be relieved more perfectly, than by Divorce; and as perfectly, as human Governments can relieve them, by the Separation a mensa et thoro.*

In this process, the parties, though not released from the bonds of Marriage, are separated from each other so far, that the innocent party is no longer bound to live with the guilty. The common property is so disposed of, also, as to furnish provision for the wants of both. The Children, at the same time, are distributed by public justice in the best manner, which the case will admit. Here, all the means are furnished, which can be furnished, for the relief, and future safety, of the aggrieved party; and incomparably better means than any, which Divorce can offer.

Thirdly. *Divorce, instead of remedying, enhances these evils beyond comprehension.*

A Law, permitting Divorces, except where personal worth and wisdom prevent, produces an immediate separation of interests among all the married persons in a community. With a complete conviction of their liability to Divorce, for the causes alleged, every married pair begin their connexion. For this event, then, common prudence requires them to make such provision, as may be in their power. The wife, the feebler and more dependent party, strongly realizing, from the beginning, her danger of being left to precarious means of subsistence, at a time always uncertain, and therefore always felt to be near, will be driven by common prudence, and powerful necessity, to lay up something in store against the evil day. The husband, aware of this state of things from the beginning, will be irresistibly led to oppose it in every part of its progress. This he will do by placing his property, so far as it may be in his power, beyond the reach of his wife; and by contending strenuously for the preservation of the remainder.

A separation of interests is, in all Intelligent beings, necessarily a separation of affections. Heaven itself would cease to be a world of love, were its inhabitants no longer to feel a common interest. Oneness of interests makes their oneness of mind, life, and labours. Separate the interests of a married pair; and you separate, at once, all their affections. Show them the probability, or even the possibility, of a future Divorce; and you show them its certainty. From this moment a separation of interests is begun. From this period, however affectionate they may originally have been, their affection will cease. The consciousness, that their interests are opposed, will immediately beget coldness, alienation, jealousy, and in the end, riveted hatred.

Between persons, living together, causes of dispute can never fail frequently to arise. Among persons, whose interests generally harmonize, and who are governed by principle and moderation, such causes produce little effect. But between persons in the situation, which I have described, they never fail to operate with their fullest efficacy. Their minds are ready to take fire on every occasion, and to construe in the worst manner every real, or supposed, provocation; every seeming neglect; every slight word; every unpleasant look. They are dissatisfied with almost every thing, that is done, or left undone. A spark will kindle such combustible materials into a flame.

Among persons, thus circumstanced, dispositions, naturally kind, soon become unkind: tempers, before sufficiently compatible, soon become utterly incompatible. Where offices of kindness would have naturally multiplied, and flourished, jars are multiplied; bitterness flourishes; disputes are generated; personal violence follows; and, not unnaturally, murder itself. Thus the very evils, which Divorce professes to relieve, it only creates; and

creates them in millions of instances, where it designs to relieve them in one. Thus plain is it, to use the language of *Dryden*, that

"God never made his work for man to mend."

Were a Divorce impossible; the interests of every married pair would be one, through life. This fact would so far unite their affections, as to prevent a great part of the debates, of which I have been speaking; and in most cases to terminate the rest without any serious difficulty. Persons, who know that their contentions are hopeless, and that, however desirable their separation might seem, it is impossible to effect it, will, almost always, so far make the best of their circumstances, as to sit down in a tolerable state of content. The absolute union of their interests cannot fail to recur, unceasingly, to their minds; nor to operate on them with powerful efficacy. Their affection, though occasionally intermitted, will return with its former strength. The necessity, which each feels of the other's good offices, will daily be realized. The superior happiness of former harmony will be remembered. Their children also, for whom their cares have been so often kindly mingled, will plead in the most interesting manner for the continuance of their mutual good will. Thus life, although not without its alternations of disquiet, will, in the main, go on pleasantly, where, in millions of instances, the knowledge, that Divorce was attainable, would have produced discord, hatred, separation and ruin.

It is well known to every observer of human nature, that a prominent part of this nature is *the love of novelty and variety, in all its pursuits.* In no case is this propensity more predominant, than in the case in hand. Polygamists have endeavoured to satisfy this propensity by replenishing their harams with a multitude of wives. Profligates have attempted to compass the same object by a promiscuous concubinage. The endeavours of both, however, have been equally fruitless. *David* by this disposition was seduced to adultery. *Solomon*, in the multiplication of wives and concubines, has shown, that it knows no limits; and that its effects are nothing but corruption and ruin. By Divorce, this disposition is let loose; and the spirit of licentiousness has the sign given to roam, and ravage, without control. The family, which all the causes of wretchedness, already mentioned, would not have made unhappy, will be ruined by this cause: a cause sufficiently powerful, and sufficiently malignant, to ruin a world.

To the Children, such a state of things is a regular source of absolute destruction. During the contentions of the Parents, which will usually be generated by the mere attainableness of a Divorce, and which become ultimately the occasion of granting it, *the children will either be forgotten, or forced to take sides with the parents.* In both cases, their whole education to useful purposes will be neglected. Particularly, they will never be *trained up in the nurture*

and admonition of the Lord. Jarring parents; and there will be millions of such parents wherever Divorce prevails, to one where it does not; can never teach their children religion, either by precept, or example. Amid their own irreligious contentions, the farce would be too gross for impudence itself to act, and too ridiculous to be received seriously even by children. They would be left, therefore, to grow up Atheists, or Nihilists, without religion, without a God, without a hope.

In the former case, all their other interests; their support, their comfort, their preparation for business, and their hopes of future usefulness, reputation, and enjoyment; would be neglected. Parents, whose minds were in a continual state of irritation, and hostility, could never unite in any thing of this nature: and nothing of this nature, in which they did not unite, would ever be done to any purpose.

In the latter case, the children would be taught to join one Parent in contending against the other. Here, they would be taught, *some to dishonour their father*, and *some to dishonour their mother;* in direct opposition to the Moral Law; and taught by those, whom God had appointed to teach them this law. Filial impiety is the most unnatural and monstrous wickedness, of which children are ordinarily guilty. We cannot wonder, therefore, that it should conduct them to every other wickedness; that it should end in impiety to God, or injustice to mankind. The children, here, are directly taught by one parent to hate and despise the other. Their contentions and calumnies, their mutual scorn and hatred, will force the children to despise both. Children, who regard their parents with habitual direspect, will soon respect neither man, nor God. Devoid of principle, destitute of every good habit, trained up to insubordination and rebellion, and witnesses, from their infancy, of discord only, malignity, abuse, and slander; they are prepared to be mere villains, nuisances, and pests, in the world.

I have all along supposed the parents to continue together, until the children have grown up to some degree of maturity and reflection. This, however, would by no means be the common case; and would exist less and less frequently, as Divorces multiplied. The consequences of an earlier separation, such as would generally take place, would be still more dreadful. *Such of the children, as followed the mother*, however affectionate might be her disposition, would share in all the calamities, necessarily springing from her unprotected, suffering condition. Women are constitutionally unfitted to encounter the rude, toilsome, and discouraging scenes, every where presented by this unkind, untoward world, and allotted by the Creator only to the robust hardihood of man. A divorced female is almost necessarily an outcast. Her children, who follow her fortunes, must be outcasts also. Defenceless herself, she cannot defend *them*. Unable to support herself, she will

be still more unable to support *them*. Even the spirit of moderation will regard her as unworthy and disgraced. The common feelings of the world will mark her as the mere butt of scorn and infamy. Why was she divorced? "Because she was unfit to sustain the character of a wife," will be the answer, every where hissed out by the tongue of contempt. In all this contempt, and in all the evils, which this wolfish spirit draws in its train, the children will necessarily share; and will be regarded, like the spurious offspring of beggars, born under a hedge, and buried in a ditch.

Such of them, as survived their multiplied sufferings; and these would be comparatively few; would be solitary, deserted beings; without a home; without a father; without education; without industry; without employment; without comforts; and without hopes; residing no where, and related to nobody. Like the wild men, said to be found at times in the Forests of *Germany* and *Poland*, and supposed to be nursed by *bears*, they would sustain the character of mere animals. At war with every thing, and by every thing warred upon; when out of sight, forgotten; and when seen, regarded only with horror; they would live without a friend; without a name; nay, sunk beneath the cattle wandering in the same deserts, without a mark, to denote to whom they belonged. Thus they would prowl through life; and putrefy on the spot, where they were seized by death.

Nor would the children, who followed the father, in most instances, be at all more comfortable. The cold-hearted cruelty of *stepmothers* is proverbial. Palpable injustice has, I doubt not, been extensively done by the unkind opinions of the public to persons of this denomination. I have myself known multitudes of persons fill this station with great integrity, tenderness, and excellence. Yet even in this enlightened, refined, and Christianized country, I believe there are few mothers, who leave the world while their families are young, without very serious anxieties concerning the treatment, which their children will receive from their future stepmothers. This, and every thing else, dreaded or complained of, with respect to the class of persons in question, exists in the midst of a community, made up of Parents, married according to the Laws of God. Their families, also, live in the midst of civilization, gentleness of manners, and the mild influence of Religion; where the whole tide of things flows favourably to humanity, justice, kindness, and all the interests of the unprotected.

Far different would be the situation of children, under this superintendence, in regions where divorce prevails. The Father, having released himself from one wife, and married another, would soon forsake the second for a third; this for a fourth; this for a fifth; and thus onward, without any known limit. A French soldier lately declared before a judicial tribunal in *Paris* that he had married eleven wives, in eleven years; and boasted of this fact as

honourable and meritorious. The *scandal* would soon vanish; and mere convenience, whim, or passion, control the conduct. What, then, would become of those children of the first wife, who fell under the management of such a succession of stepmothers; absolute strangers to their family, their interests, and even their legitimacy: their mothers, only for a year, a month, or a day: mothers, before whom they would only pass in review, rather than with whom they would live: mothers, distracted in their affections, if they had any; certainly in their thoughts, cares, and labours, distributed to so many children of so many sorts, having so many interests, and distracted, themselves, by so many contentions? Who does not see with a glance, that, even where humanity and principle reigned, these friendless beings would soon be neglected by the stepmother in favour of her own offspring? What must be their fate, where lewdness had succeeded to principle, and humanity had already been frozen out of the heart? Soon, very soon, must they become mere and miserable outcasts; like those, who wandered away from their father's house with their divorced mother.

Divorces, once authorized, would soon become numerous, and in most countries would, in a moderate period of time, control the whole state of society. Even in *this State*, where the tide of manners and morals is entirely against them, and where, for somewhat more than a century, they have blackened the public character with a strange, and solitary, but dreadful, spot, they were, indeed, for a long time, rare. The deformity of the object was so great, the prevalence of vital Religion was so general, and the power of Conscience and of public opinion so efficacious, that few, very few comparatively, had sufficient hardihood to apply. The Law, also, allowed of less latitude to applications. At the present time, the progress of this evil is alarming and terrible. In this town,* within five years, more than fifty divorces have been granted: at an average calculation, more than four hundred in the whole State during this period: that is, one, out of every hundred married pairs. What a flaming proof is, here, of the baleful influence of this corruption on a people, otherwise remarkably distinguished for their intelligence, morals, and religion! Happily, a strenuous opposition is begun to this anti-scriptural law, which it may be fairly hoped, will soon terminate in its final revocation.

In *France*, within three months after the Law, permitting Divorces, was enacted by the National Assembly, there were, in the City of *Paris* almost as many Divorces registered, as Marriages. In the whole Kingdom, there were, as reported by the Abbe *Gregoire*, Chairman of a Committee of the National Assembly on that subject, upwards of twenty thousand Divorces registered within

* New-Haven

about a year and an half. "This Law," added the Abbe, "will soon ruin the whole nation."

From these facts, as well as from the nature of the case, it is clearly evident, that the progress of Divorce, though different in different countries, will, in all, be dreadful beyond conception. Within a moderate period, the whole community will be thrown, by laws made in open opposition to the Laws of God, into a general prostitution. No difference exists between this prostitution, and that which customarily bears the name, except that the one is licensed, the other is unlicensed, by man. To the Eye of God, those, who are polluted in each of these modes, are alike, and equally, impure, loathsome, abandoned wretches; the offspring of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*. They are divorced and undivorced, adulterers and adulteresses; of whom the Spirit of Truth hath said, that not one of them *shall enter into the kingdom of God*. Over such a country, a virtuous man, if such an one be found, will search in vain, to find a virtuous wife. Wherever he wanders, nothing will meet his eye, but stalking, barefaced pollution. The realm around him has become one vast Brothel; one great province of the World of Perdition. To that dreadful world the only passage out of it directly leads: and all its inhabitants, thronging this broad and crooked way, hasten with one consent to that *blackness of darkness*, which envelops it for ever.

SERMON CXXII.

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.—IDLENESS.—PRODIGALITY.

EXODUS XX. 15.—*Thou shalt not steal.*

THE preceding Command prohibits all trespasses against *purity*; this against *property*.

To steal, is to take privately the property of others, with an intention to convert it to our own use. To rob, is to take the same property, for the same purpose, openly, and with violence. There can be little necessity of expatiating upon a crime, so well understood, and so universally infamous, as stealing, before an assembly, whose education, principles, and habits, furnish so strong a barrier against it. It may, however, be useful to observe, that this crime has its origin in that spirit of covetousness, which prompts us to wish, inordinately, for the enjoyments, and possessions, of others. This spirit, when indulged, continually acquires strength; and in many instances becomes, ultimately, so powerful, as to break over every bound of right, and reputation. The object in contemplation is seen to be desirable. As we continue to contemplate it, it becomes more and more desirable. While the attention of the mind is fixed upon it, it will be turned, comparatively, very little to other objects; particularly to those moral restraints, which hinder us from acquiring what we thus covet. The importance, and obligation, of these restraints, gradually fade from before the eye. The man, engaged only in the business of obtaining the intended gratification, naturally finds little leisure, or inclination, to dwell upon the danger, shame or sin, of seizing on his neighbour's possessions. Thus he becomes unhappily prepared to put forth a bold and rash hand, and to pluck the tempting enjoyment, in spite of the awful prohibitions of his Maker. He, who does not covet, will never steal. He, who indulges covetousness, will find himself in danger, wherever there is a temptation.

In examining this precept, it will be my principal design to consider the subject of *Fraud*.

That Fraud is implicitly forbidden in this Precept will not, I suppose, be questioned. The Catechism of the *Westminster Assembly of Divines* explains the Command in this manner. "It requires," say they, "the lawful procuring, and furthering, the wealth and outward estate of ourselves, and others;" and "forbids whatsoever doth, or may, unjustly hinder our own, or our neighbour's wealth, or outward estate."

In the Catechism of King *Edward* it is thus explained. "It commandeth us to beguile no man; to occupy no unlawful wares; to envy no man his wealth; and to think nothing profitable, that either is not just, or differeth from right and honesty." In this manner we are abundantly warranted to understand it by our Saviour's Commentary on the other Commands, in his sermon on the Mount. Accordingly, it has been generally understood in the same comprehensive manner by divines. To this interpretation, the nature of the subject gives the fullest warrant. *All that, which is sinful in theft, is the taking of our neighbour's property, without his knowledge or consent, and converting it to our own use.* In every fraud we do exactly the same thing, although in a different manner. Every fraud, therefore, whatever be the form in which it is practised, partakes of the very same sinful nature, which is found in theft.

Fraud is in all instances a violation of what is commonly called *Honesty*, or *Commutative Justice. Honesty, in the Scriptural sense, is a disposition to render, or the actual rendering of, an equivalent for what we receive, in our dealings with others.* This equivalent may consist either of *property*, or of *services;* Honesty being equally concerned with both. At the same time, there is such a thing, as *defrauding one's self.* "Whatsoever doth, or may unjustly hinder our own outward estate," or, in other words, *that comfort, and benefit, which we might derive from our property, or from our opportunities of acquiring it, is of this nature; and is accordingly forbidden by this Commandment.*

With these introductory observations, I shall now proceed to consider the prohibition in the Text, under the following heads:

I. *The Fraudulent Conduct, which respects Ourselves, and our Families;* and,

II. *That, which respects others.*

I. *I shall mention several kinds of fraudulent conduct, which most immediately respects ourselves, and our families.*

All the members of a Family have a common interest; and are so intimately united in every domestic concern, that, *if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.* Whatever affects the head must affect the whole body. If a man defraud himself, either directly, or indirectly, he cannot fail, therefore, of defrauding his family. For this reason, I have thought it proper to consider *the Family* of a man, as united with *himself* in this part of my Subject. The

1. *Specimen of Fraud, which I shall mention under this head, is Idleness.*

That Idleness hinders our own wealth, or outward estate, will not be questioned. *I went by the field of the slothful,* says *Solomon, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding, and lo! it was all grown over with thorns; and nettles had covered the*

face thereof; and the stone-wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw and considered it well. I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

Idleness, at the same time, is obviously a fraud. The lazy man cheats himself of good, which God hath given to him; of enjoyments, put into his hands by the bounty of his Creator. These blessings he barters for the love of ease. The price, which he pays, is very great: that, which he gets in return, is *dross and dung.*

The Mischiefs of Idleness are numerous, and important.

In the first place. *Idleness is a sinful waste of our Time.*

Our time is a possession, of inestimable value. The best employment of it, that is, such an employment of it as the Scriptures require, involves all, which is meant by our duty. The loss, or waste, of it, is, therefore, no other than the loss or omission of all our duty; the frustration of the purpose for which we were created.

Secondly. *Idleness is a sinful waste of our Talents.*

By these I mean all the powers of body and mind; and the means, which God has furnished us in his Providence, of employing them for valuable ends. Our Time and Talents, united, constitute our whole capacity of being useful; our worth; our all. The idle man wastes them both; *wraps them up in a napkin, and buries them in the earth.* In this manner he robs God of the end for which he was made; and becomes a burden upon the shoulders of his fellow-men. He eats what others provide: and, while *they* are industriously engaged in labour, *his* business is only to devour. Thus he is carried by mankind, as a load, from the cradle to the grave; is despised, loathed, and execrated, while he lives; and, when he dies, is buried, like the carcass of an animal, to fulfil the demands of decency, and merely to get rid of a nuisance.

In the mean time, his *drowsiness clothes* himself and his family *with rags;* prevents them from the enjoyments, common to all around them; disappoints, without a reason perceivable by *them*, all their just expectations; and, as was formerly observed concerning the drunkenness of a Parent, sinks them below the common level of mankind. Want in every form, and all the miseries of want, arrest them daily, and through life. Their food is poor and scanty. Their clothes are rags. They are pinched with cold, through the destitution of fuel; and deprived of refreshing sleep, because their bed is the earth, and because their dwelling, a mere sieve, admits without obstruction snow and rain, the frost and the storm. Thus, while they see almost all others around them possessed in abundance, not of the necessaries only, but of all the comforts, and most of the conveniences, of life; they them-

selves are forced to look on, and thirst, and pine, for the tempting enjoyments: while, like *Tantalus*, they are forbidden by an iron-handed necessity to taste the good.

At the same time, the man is forced to feel, while his family also are compelled by him to feel, that he, their husband, and their father, is the subject of supreme folly, and insignificance, and of gross, unremitted, and hopeless sin; of folly, which is causeless; insignificance, voluntarily assumed; sin, unnecessary and wanton; and that he is an object of general and extreme contempt. The contempt, directed immediately to him, is of course extended to his family, also; and they are compelled, at their first entrance into the world, to encounter the eye of scorn, and the tongue of derision. All these evils are sustained, also, only that the man may lead the life of a sluggard, be assimilated to the sloth in his character, and rival the swine in his favourite mode of life, and his most coveted enjoyments.

Thirdly. *Idleness exposes a man to many temptations, and many sins.*

A lazy man is, of course, without any useful engagement: his mind is therefore vacant, and ready for the admission of any sin, which seeks admission. To such a man temptations may be said to be always welcome. They are guests, for which he is regularly prepared: and he has neither company nor business, to hinder him from yielding to them whatever attention, or entertainment, they may demand. The proverbial adage, that "Satan will employ him, who does not find employment for himself," is founded in experience, and good sense. The mind, even of the idlest man, will be busy; and the mind, which is not busied in its duty, will be busied in sin. On such a mind every temptation is secure of a powerful influence; entices without opposition; and conquers without even a struggle, or a sigh. Hence we find such a man devoted, not only to the general sin of idleness, but to all the other sins which he can conveniently practise.

The Sluggard, says Solomon, *is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men, that can render a reason.* From this miserable vanity, of which their deplorable mismanagement of their own affairs ought to cure them at a glance, it arises that Sluggards so commonly become *the professed counsellors of mankind.* Hence it arises, that so many of them are *politicians*, *pettifoggers*, and *separatical preachers.* They know nothing, it is true, except what an abecedarian knows, of either *Divinity*, *Law*, or *Government.* Still they feel, and declare, themselves to be abundantly able to teach the way to Heaven, which they have never learned; and to explain Laws, which they never studied. The affairs of a Nation, so numerous, so complicated, and so extensive, as to be comprehended only by minds peculiarly capacious, and to demand the laborious study of a life, these men understand instinctively; without inquiry, information, or thought. Their own affairs, it

is true, they manage in such a manner, as to conduct them only to ruin; yet they feel perfectly competent to manage the affairs of a Nation with pre-eminent skill, and certain success. Every thing in the concerns of the public, if you will believe them, goes wrong; and will never be set right, if you will believe them a little further, by any body but themselves. These men are *smoke to the eyes, and vinegar to the teeth,* of persons possessing real understanding. To the public they are mere nuisances, living on the earnings of others; fomentors of discontent; active agents in riots and broils; incendiaries, who consume the peace and comfort of all around them, and who well deserve to be *the by-word and the hissing*, of every upright and benevolent citizen. Such were the men, whom the *Jews* of *Thessalonica* gathered into a company against *Paul;* who *set all the City in an uproar;* and attempted to destroy the Apostle, and his Religion, by the violence of a mob. They were αγοραιοι; translated *lewd fellows of the baser sort;* literally, *idle, lounging haunters of market places.*

It ought particularly to be remembered, that *persons of this character rarely become converts to Christianity.* Among all those, who, within my knowledge, have appeared to become sincerely penitent and reformed, I recollect only a single lazy man: and this man became industrious from the moment of his apparent, and, I doubt not, real conversion. The sinful prostitution of his time and talents by idleness, and his ready admission of temptations to his heart, fix the idler in a regular hostility against all the promises, and threatenings, of Religion: while his self-conceit makes him too wise, willingly to receive wisdom even from God. Few cases in human life are, in this respect, more desperate, than that of the Idler. A Preacher, destined to address an assembly of such men, might, with nearly the same hope of success, exchange his Desk for the Church-Yard; and waste his eloquence upon the tenants of the grave.

In the mean time, every lazy man ought steadily to remember, that *his very subsistence is founded on Fraud. If any man will not work*, saith the Proprietor of all things, *neither let him eat.* For him to eat is to rob; to rob his Maker of *his* property, and his fellow-men of *theirs.*

2. *Prodigality is another Fraud, of the same general nature.*

There are various modes of Prodigality. Property may be wasted by negligence; by foolish bargains; by the injudicious management of business; by bold adventures, and by direct profusion. The guilt, in the different cases, may vary somewhat. The general nature of the conduct, its folly, and its end, are substantially the same. There will, therefore, be no necessity of distinguishing it, here, with any particular attention.

The effects of Prodigality are, in many respects, exactly the same with those of Idleness. By both of these vices property is

effectually wasted. The negligent waster of property is influenced by the same motives, which govern the Idler; and shuns the labour of *preserving* it, as the Idler the labour of *acquiring* it, from the mere love of ease. The Spendthrift squanders it, from a foolish fondness for the several enjoyments, of which he makes it the price; from the love of show; the indulgence of whim; and the relish for luxurious and voluptuous gratification. The objects of his expense are, either in their degree, or their kind, always unnecessary to his true interest, and his real comfort. Passions, which ought not to be indulged; whims, which ought not to exist, much less to be cherished; govern his mind with despotic sway; and make him their absolute and miserable slave. Unsatisfied with what he is, and what he has, he pines incessantly, with a sickly taste for some new gratification; for objects, in which he supposes happiness to lie, and in which he expects to satisfy a relish, too restless, craving, and capricious, ever to be satisfied. His appetite is canine; not merely eating and drinking, but devouring; and, although daily crammed, is still hungry.

Vanity and pride are also perpetual prompters to the Prodigal; vanity, which cries with an unceasing voice, "*Give, give;*" pride, which never saith, "*It is enough.*" Goaded by these passions, he struggles with unceasing anxiety to outrun those around him in the splendour of dress, equipage, houses, gardens, and other objects of expense. The contest of one with many is almost necessarily unequal. It is scarcely possible, that some of his competitors should not excel him in one thing, and some in another; or that, whenever he is excelled, he should not be unhappy. In its nature, the strife is unwise, and fruitless; because neither the spirit, nor the efforts, of rivalry, ever made any man happy. In its progress, it necessarily disappoints all his eager wishes, and fond hopes. When he succeeds, the expected enjoyment expires in the very moment of success: when he fails, the disappointment makes him miserable. With all this, he is preparing himself insensibly for more accumulated misery. No Prodigal ever looks into his affairs; nor conjectures the extent of his expenses. Of course, no Prodigal ever perceives the rapidity with which his property declines. To men of this sort ruin is always nearer, than they mistrust; and hastens with a celerity, of which they never dreamed. While the means of expense are supposed to last, the whole host of sharpers fasten on him as their prey. The jockey cheats him in a bargain. The swindler borrows, and runs away with his money. The usurer furnishes him with loans, at an enormous interest. Heedless of expense, and greedy of the enjoyments which it procures, every manufacturer of frippery, every owner of a toy-shop selects him as his own best customer; and exchanges the merchandize of Vanity-fair for his money and his lands.

Such a career Providence never suffers to last long. Unsuspected by himself, but foreseen by all around him, Ruin, hastening with rapid steps, knocks at his door in an evil hour. The host of wretches, who pamper themselves on his extravagance while they secretly laugh at his folly, startled at the sound, are out of sight in a moment. They have, indeed, rioted at his expense; and might be expected to be grateful for what he has given. But gratitude is rarely created by profusion; and the hearts of such men were never susceptible of gratitude. They have feasted on enjoyments, which he furnished: but they came only to feast; not to sympathize. They have encouraged his expense; praised his generosity; admired his taste; and professed a deep interest in his happiness. But their whole business terminated in enjoying, praising, admiring, and professing. They are harpies, who gathered around him, to revel on his profusion; and sycophants, who flattered him, that they might be admitted to the revel. For him, for any other human being, they never exercised a generous thought; a sympathizing feeling; an honest Good-will. The house of suffering has no charms for *them*. They came only to get; and, when they can get no longer, they come no more.

When they have taken their flight; instead of being grateful to him for the enjoyments, on which they have so long, and so riotously feasted at his expense, they are among the first, most incessant, and most clamorous, of those, who load him with censure. Instead of pitying his calamities; calamities, into which they have persuaded, urged, and flattered him; they make both him, and them, the butt of ridicule; a mark, for scorn to shoot at; and persuade the world to forget, that they have been eminently the causes of his destruction, by vociferating their contempt of his folly.

In the mean time, his door is thronged by a mob of duns, and a host of bailiffs. His houses and lands pass away to the sharpers, who have been long fattening upon his spoils. His equipage, his furniture, even the very bed on which he has slept, is struck off to the highest bidder. The sprightly sound of the viol, and the harpsichord, is succeeded by the rude hammer of the Auctioneer. Broken in fortune, and broken in heart, the miserable squanderer, and his miserable family, quit their luxurious mansion, and shelter themselves in a solitary hovel.

This wretched career is rendered more sinful, and more unhappy, by the avarice, which regularly haunts the prodigal. *Addison*, in a beautiful allegory, informs us, that Luxury and Avarice were formerly at war; that, after various vicissitudes of fortune, they agreed, at length, to a permanent peace; on the condition, that Luxury should dismiss Plenty from his service, and Avarice, Poverty; their respective Ministers of State; and that Avarice should become the Minister of Luxury, and Luxury of Avarice, by

turns. Since that period, he informs us, Luxury ministers to Avarice, and Avarice to Luxury. Every prodigal is, in intention at least, a luxurious man. Every prodigal, almost, is avaricious. He grasps at money eagerly, that he may find the means of continuing his darling profusion; and covets with as craving an appetite, that he may spend, as the miser, that he may hoard. Like the miserable sufferers, described by Isaiah, he *will not spare even his own brother;* but *will snatch on the right hand, and still be hungry; and devour on the left, and will not be satisfied.*

Equally exposed is he to the sin of Fraud; as perpetrated upon his fellow-men. Peculiarly is he of the number of those *wicked, who borrow and never pay.* No man is more lavish of promises, notes, and bonds; and no man more stinted in discharging his honest debts. The farmer, mechanic, and manufacturer, are peculiarly the objects of his fraud. The debts, which he pays at all, are those, which he is pleased to style debts of honour; the debts of luxury; debts, contracted to furnish the means of splendour and voluptuousness. The necessaries of life are objects, too humble to be ranked in the list of his enjoyments. Insignificant in themselves, that is, as he estimates them, they are not felt to be deserving of his attention. Those, who furnish them, also, are too modest, and too quiet, to compel his regard. Those, who gratify the demands of show and pleasure, are, in his view, persons of higher consequence; and are usually too clamorous, and too persevering, in their demands, to suffer them to be turned away by a mere succession of empty promises. *Their* claims are of course first satisfied. Not *the rich*, but *the poor*, and *the hungry*, are here *sent away empty.*

The same necessity, which drives him to promise-breaking, urges him also into its twin vice of lying. He wants money daily; and as the ordinary means of obtaining it fail, he resorts to every art, and fetch, and falsehood, to supply his pressing necessities. A true account of his circumstances, and designs, would prevent every supply. To falsehood therefore, and to trick, he betakes himself, as the most obvious means of relieving his immediate wants. In this manner he becomes, within a moderate period, a common cheat, and a common liar.

Nor is the prodigal much less in danger from drunkenness. The peculiar distress, which attends the consciousness of embarrassed affairs, made up of the strong pressure of wants, without the means of relieving them, a continual apprehension of approaching ruin, united with an insurmountable reluctance to make any efforts towards preventing it, edged, and pointed, by a succession of duns, mortified pride, vanishing pleasures, and clamorous appetites; this peculiar distress is a powerful and frequent cause of habitual intoxication. The unhappy being, who is the subject of such distress, instinctively hunts, but hunts in vain. for relief, and even for

consolation. Despair meets him at every corner. Often, the only alleviation, which presents itself to his afflicted eye, is the terrible resort to the transient stupefaction of strong drink. Thus the forlorn wretch, with a varied indeed, but always downward, course, makes his situation worse and worse; and hurries himself to final ruin by the very means, on which he fastens for relief.

Nor is the prodigal in small danger of becoming a Suicide. He has lived, for a length of time, in the gratification of Pride, the enjoyment of conscious superiority, and an uninterrupted course of voluptuous indulgence. When the dreams of greatness are over; and the riot of pleasure has ceased; the change to want and degradation is often too sudden, and almost always too great, to be borne with equanimity. In the earlier moments of desperation, it is not uncommon to see the prodigal betake himself, for refuge from the load of humiliation and despair, to poison, the pistol, or the halter. *Among those, who become suicides in the possession of their reason, a more numerous list is no where found, than that, which is composed of ruined prodigals.* Few men have sufficient fortitude to sustain, without shrinking, the excruciating evils, to which persons of this description regularly hurry themselves: excruciating, I mean, *to such men.* We do indeed meet, at times, beings, who, like disturbed ghosts, haunt places of public resort; and labour to keep in the remembrance of mankind the shadows, shreds, and tatters, of their former gayety and splendour; and serve, as way-marks, to warn the traveller of his approach to a quagmire, or a precipice. But far more commonly they shrink from the public eye, and from the neglect, and contempt, which they are conscious of having merited; and, not unfrequently, hide themselves for ever from the sight by hurrying into the future world.

The prodigal is, also, *dreadfully exposed to hardness of heart.* Should he continue to live; should he become neither a suicide, nor a drunkard; still the love of expense and pleasure, grown by indulgence into an obstinate habit, the long-continued forgetfulness of God, the total negligence of religion and all its duties, the entire absorption in the present, and the absolute disregard of the future, universally attendant on this mode of life, naturally render the heart callous to every divine impression. A man, who thus eagerly forgets God, ought certainly to expect, that God will forget him. For, no man says to the Almighty more frequently, or more uniformly, *Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* From the house of God, from the Scriptures, nay, even from prayer, the last hope of miserable man, he voluntarily cuts himself off. What prospects must he then form concerning his future being!

The Family of the Prodigal share necessarily in most of his calamities, and almost necessarily in many of his sins. A great part of the same temptations arrest them, of course. A great

part of the sins are provided for them, and regularly served up. Should they escape from moral ruin, the event would be little short of a miracle, unless it should be accomplished by an early, and timely, failure of the means of sin. The sufferings, to which they are exposed, are numberless. The prodigal, fascinated by show and pleasure, cannot attend to the education of his children. He cannot spare from his own enjoyments, in his view indispensable, the means of education abroad; particularly an education, at all suited to their original circumstances, the expectations which he has forced them to form, and the wishes which they have reasonably, as well as naturally, cherished. Religious instruction, admonition, and reproof; a prodigal never can give. He, who does not pray for himself, cannot be expected to pray for his family. The parent, who does not frequent the house of God, will soon see it forsaken by his children. Thus the education of his children will be deserted by the prodigal. The invaluable season of childhood and youth will be lost, and those early impressions, both economical and religious, those important habits, on which the good of this life, and of the life to come, is in a great measure founded, are never established in their minds.

To their comfortable settlement, whatever may be his wishes, he has voluntarily lost the power to contribute. Before the period arrives, at which this important object is to be accomplished, his wife, if she has not died of a broken heart, and her children, usually see him a beggar; and follow him to the hovel, which has become his only shelter. Hence, if they survive the ruin of their hopes, the children are soon turned into the world, to make their way through all the thorns and briers, which regularly embarrass the path of persons in such a situation. The Hand, which feeds the young ravens, when they cry, does, indeed, usually feed *them*. Earthly friends, at times also, they may find; and sometimes may be regarded by strangers with compassion and tenderness, which they never experienced from him, who gave them birth.

REMARKS.

1. *By these considerations, Parents are taught the incalculable importance of educating their children to Industry and Economy.*

Revolve for a moment the miserable character, circumstances, and end, of those, who have been the subjects of this discourse. Who would be willing, who would not shudder at the thought, that such would be the character, such the circumstances, and such the end, of his own children? How shall this dreadful catastrophe be prevented? Under God, only by a faithful education of children to Industry and Economy; by habituation to some useful, active business; or some diligent, sedentary employment; by thorough instructions, and a persuasive example. These are the fountains of sustenance to human life. A fortune, bequeathed to children, or provided for them at an earlier period, instead of be-

ing a secure provision for their future wants, is commonly a mere incitement to ruin; a bounty, given to idleness; a watchword to begin the career of confusion.

The *Jews* are said, during some periods, at least, of their existence as a people, to have educated their children, universally, in active business; and to have adopted, proverbially, this aphorism, that *he, who does not bring up his child to useful industry, brings him up to be a beggar, and a nuisance.* It is to be fervently wished, that all Christian Parents would adopt the same maxim, and thus prepare their children to become blessings both to themselves and mankind. It has been repeatedly observed in these discourses, that Industry and Economy are not natural to man, and can only be established by habituation. These habits must both be begun in the morning of life; or there is danger, that they will never be begun successfully. As no man, consistently with his plain duty, can be excused from being industrious and economical, himself; so no man can be justified for a moment, who does not effectually communicate both Industry and Economy to his children. He, who, at the first, made labour the employment of mankind; and who afterwards commanded to gather up the fragments, that nothing might be lost; will admit no excuse for the neglect of these duties, whether they respect ourselves, or our offspring. In this subject, Parents and children of both sexes are equally concerned. Both parents are bound to teach their children; and their children, of both sexes, are bound to learn, to be industrious, and to be economical; to fill up their time with useful employments; to methodize it, that it may be thus filled up; and to feel, that the loss of time, the neglect of talents, and the waste of property, are all serious violations of their duty to God. The parents are bound to inspire, and the children to imbibe, a contempt, an abhorrence, for that silly, worthless frivolity, to which so many children, of fashionable parents especially, are trained; that sinful waste of the golden hours of life; that sickly devotion to amusement; that shameful, pitiable dependence on trifling, to help them along, even tolerably, through their present, tedious, dragging existence. Few persons are more to be pitied, as certainly few are more to be blamed, than those, who find their enjoyment only in diversions; and cling to a ride, a dance, a visit, a play, or a novel, to keep them from sinking into gloom and despondence. Industrious persons, who spend their time in useful pursuits, are the only persons whose minds are serene, contented, and cheerful. If we wish happiness for our children, then; we shall carefully educate them to an industrious life.

Let no parent, at the same time, forget what alarming temptations, and what gross sins, surround idleness and profusion. This consideration will, if any thing will, compel parents to educate their children in this manner. The parent's fortune is, here, of no significance. The heir of a fortune is far more exposed to all these

evils, than he, who has none. If he is to go through life with a fortune; he is to be taught to earn, and to preserve, property. Without this instruction, he will, probably, ere long be beggared, tempted without any defence to multiplied sins, and become a liar, a cheat, a drunkard, and perhaps a suicide. What parent would not tremble at the thought, that his own negligence would entail these evils upon his offspring?

2. *Young persons, whatever may have been their education, are, here, forcibly taught to pursue an industrious and economical life.*

The children of wealthy parents are generally prone to believe, that they are destined, not to usefulness, but to enjoyment; and that they may be idle, therefore, without a crime. No opinion is more groundless; and very few are more fatal. God made all mankind to be useful. This character he requires of them without conditions. He, who does not assume it, will be found inexcusable at the final day. Every human ear ought to tingle, and every heart to shudder, at the doom of the unprofitable servant in the Gospel.

Still more prone are youths to believe, that profusion is honourable; and to shrink from the imputation of niggardly conduct. There is no more absolute absurdity, than the supposition, that prodigality and generosity are the same thing. They are not even allied. Generosity consists in giving freely, when a valuable purpose demands it; and with a disposition, benevolently inclined to promote that purpose. Prodigality is the squandering of property, not for valuable, but base and contemptible purposes; for the mere gratification of voluptuousness, vanity, and pride. All these gratifications are mean, selfish, and despicable. The generous man feels the value of property. The prodigal has no sense of this value. The generous man gives, because what he gives will do real good to the recipient: the prodigal, because he cares nothing about property, except as it enables him to acquire reputation, to gratify his pride, to make an ostentatious display of wealth, or to outstrip and mortify a rival. In all this there is not an approach towards generosity. On the contrary, the motives are grovelling and contemptible; and the manner, in which they are exhibited to the eye, is disingenuous and hypocritical; a gaudy dress upon a loathsome skeleton. But the prodigal fails of the very reward, which he proposes as the chief object of his expense. In spite of all his wishes, and efforts, even weak men perceive, that he is totally destitute of generosity; and those who most flatter, are the first to forsake, him: while, to shelter their own meanness and treachery, they proclaim, more loudly than any others, his weakness, faults, and miseries, to mankind.

Let every youth, then, fasten his eye on this wretched character, this pernicious conduct, and this deplorable end. His own exposure let him strongly feel. Let him realize with solemn emotions of mind; that Idleness and Profusion are broad and beaten

roads to ruin, both in this world and that which is to come. With these views, let him devote all his time to some useful and upright employment; and thus make every day yield its blessings. What he acquires by commendable industry, let him faithfully preserve by prudent, watchful care. In this manner he will become nonourable in the sight of wise and good men, a blessing to himself, to his family, and to mankind: while he will, at the same time, fulfil one important end of his being.

SERMON CXXIII.

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.—FRAUD.

EXODUS XX. 15.—*Thou shalt not steal.*

HAVING considered *the Frauds, which men practise upon Themselves, and their Families*, I shall now proceed to examine the

II. *Head of discourse, proposed at that time:* viz. *The Frauds which we practise upon others.*

Of these, the

1. *Class, which I shall mention, is those which respect Borrowing the property of others.*

Frauds of this kind are so numerous, that it is impossible here to mention them all; and so common, that most persons practise them without even suspecting themselves to be criminal. Still they are frauds; and crimes, which admit of no excuse.

Of this transgression persons are guilty, *whenever they suffer that, which has been loaned to them, to be injured through their own Negligence.* This evil is extremely common; and by a great part of mankind is scarcely regarded, unless when the injury is considerable, as being censurable at all. Still it is obviously a violation of confidence; a falsification of the terms, upon which the loan was given, and received. No man ever lent any thing, of any value, with an agreement on his part, that it should be injured, unnecessarily, by the borrower. No man ever received a loan, with a profession on his part, that he expected to injure the thing lent, unless in cases, where the nature of the transaction obviously involved the injury, and a consequent compensation. This, it will be observed, is a case, properly arranged under the head of *bargains*, and not of *loans*. Persons are guilty of this kind of Fraud, also, *when they return, instead of a consumable, or perishable, article, which they have borrowed, what is of inferior value.* We often borrow those things, which perish in the use. In this case, not a small number of individuals satisfy their consciences, if they return the same thing in kind, and quantity, although plainly inferior in its value. A scrupulous spirit of integrity would induce us rather to return somewhat more, in value, than we have received; that we may make due satisfaction for the property loaned, and for the particular convenience which it has furnished us.

Another Fraud of the same nature is practised, *whenever we unreasonably detain in our possession whatever has been loaned to us.*

Most persons, probably, are in a greater or less degree chargeable with this fault. A want of punctuality in this respect is a serious evil; extending very far; and often intruding, not a little, upon the peace and comfort of good neighbourhood. But there are persons, who go through life, borrowing without thinking of returning that which they borrow; and who thus doubly tax the good nature of those around them. This conduct is totally contrary to good faith, and to plain justice. Every borrower, in his application for every loan, is understood, and knows that he is understood, by the lender to engage, not only to return that which he borrows, but to return it within a reasonable time. It is unjust, and unkind, to retain the property of the lender beyond his consent; to use it beyond his permission; and thus to reward his kindness with injury.

Of a similar Fraud are we guilty, *when we employ that, which is lent, for purposes, and in modes, not contemplated by the lender.* Multitudes of mankind are guilty of this crime; and in ways almost innumerable. All our right to the use of the loan, not only as to the fact, but also as to the manner, and the degree, is derived solely from the consent of the owner. To that, which he has not given, we have not, and cannot have, any right. We are bound, therefore, scrupulously to use what we borrow, within the limits of his permission. When we transgress these limits, we obviously violate the plain dictates of common justice; and are, therefore, inexcusable.

There is, perhaps, no fraud, of which youths, sent abroad for their education, are so frequently guilty, or to which they are so strongly solicited by temptation, as one strongly resembling this, which I have described. They are, of course, entrusted by their parents with property, necessary, or supposed to be necessary, to defray the expenses of their education. Every parent has his own views concerning the manner in which this property is to be expended. This manner the Parent usually prescribes to his child; and has an absolute right to prescribe it. The *property* is his own: the *child* is his own. Both the manner, therefore, and the expense, of the child's education he has an absolute right to control. The parent's prescription, then, the child cannot escape without fraud; nor can he violate it without filial impiety.

When such a Youth expends the property, entrusted to him by his Parents, in any manner, or to any degree, beyond his parent's choice; so far as that choice is made known to him; he is guilty of fraud; and violates the Command, which I am discussing. Nay, if he is reasonably satisfied concerning what his parent's choice *would be*, although it has not been explicitly declared, he is bound scrupulously to regard it in all his conduct; and to expend no more, and for no other purposes, than those, which are involved in his parent's pleasure. Nor can he, consistently with his plain

duty, pursue different objects, and conduct himself in a different manner, from what his parent has prescribed, without being guilty of similar fraud.

The parent may not indeed, and probably will not often, punish his child for these transgressions. Often he may quietly acquiesce in the wrong. Still the conduct is not the less sinful; nor the child the less guilty. Human tribunals fail of punishing many crimes; but they do not, for this reason, cease to be crimes. If a child would avoid sin; if he would, in this respect, be blameless in the sight of God, he must direct all his expenses, and regulate all his conduct, conscientiously, according to the will and prescription of his parents. To this end, he must limit his wants to the allowed measure of his expenses; and act, scrupulously, as he would act, if his parents were continually present.

2. *Another species of Frauds is practised in what is called Trespassing on the property of others.*

Frauds of this nature are very numerous, and greatly diversified. Many persons, without being sensible of doing any injustice, walk through the inclosures of others, and tread down their grass, grain, and other valuable productions of their labour. Others leave open the entrances to their inclosures; and thus expose the fruits of the earth to damage, and often to destruction. Others still, plunder their gardens, orchards, and fields, of such fruits, particularly, as are delicious. Others plunder their forests of wood, both for their own consumption, and for the market. Both these acts are, however, falsely called *Trespasses*. No actions of man are more obviously *thefts*, in the full sense. Accordingly, they are spoken of in the language of common sense, and common custom, only under the name of Stealing. Others suffer their cattle, accustomed to break through inclosures, to go at large in their own fields; and thus, in reality, turn them into the fields of their neighbours. To dwell no longer on this part of the subject, multitudes habitually neglect to repair their own walls, and fences; and in this manner leave a continual passage for their cattle into the fields of their neighbours.

A very different set of Trespasses, (I do not mean in the legal sense; for I know not what name Law would give them) and undertaken with very different views, is found *in the operations of that spirit of vulgar mischief, which through envy, or some other base passion, cherishes a contemptible hostility against the improvement, and beauty, of building, fencing, and planting, formed by its prosperous neighbours.* This spirit prompts the unworthy minds, in which it dwells, to mar and deface handsome buildings and fences; to root up, or cut down trees and shrubs, planted for shade, and for ornament. This spirit is no other, than that of *the dog in the manger.* It will neither enjoy the good itself; nor suffer any others to enjoy it. One would think, that, in the view of such minds, beauty and elegance were public nuisances; and that to have con-

tributed to adorn one's country with the delightful productions of nature, and art, is a trespass upon the common good.

Another class of Frauds, possessing the same nature, is seen in most places, at least in this country, *in the abuses of public property*. Public buildings are almost every where injured and defaced; the windows are broken; the doors, wainscoting, pillars, and other appurtenances formed of wood, are shamefully carved, and hacked; the courts, balustrades, and other vulnerable articles, are mangled, and destroyed. In a word, injuries of this nature, are endless; and all of them are scandalous frauds; useless to the perpetrators; wounding to every man of integrity and taste; discouragements to public improvement; and sources of public deformity, and disgrace.

Another class of these Frauds is denoted by the general name, *Peculation*.

It will be useless for me to dwell on what Nations have so long, and so loudly, complained of: the plunder of the Public by statesmen, commissioners, and contractors; men, who appear to feel a prescriptive right to fatten themselves on the spoils of the community. There are, I fear, but few men, comparatively, who feel themselves bound to deal with *the public*, or *with any body of their fellow-men*, agreeably to the same strict and equitable principles, which most persons acknowledge to be indispensable in dealing with *individuals*. For services, rendered to public bodies, almost all men demand a greater reward, than they would dare to claim from individuals. For commodities, sold to them, they charge a higher price. In settling accounts with them, they claim greater allowances: and in every transaction plainly intend to get more, than custom and equity have permitted in the private business of mankind. The single article of *Perquisites* is a gulf of voracity, which has no bottom. The only rule, by which this undefined class of demands seems to be controlled, is to claim whatever the person indebted can be expected to give.

The common doctrine among all the claimants, to whom I have referred, appears to be, that *there is no wrong in demanding more of public bodies for the same service, or the same commodity, than of individuals, because public bodies are more able to pay*. Justice, on the contrary, affixes the same value to the same thing. This value will be affixed by every honest man; and will be his only rule of compensation for his commodities, or his labours, whoever may be the purchaser, or the employer.

In every one of the cases, which I have specified, the persons concerned defraud their fellow-men of their property, and cheat themselves out of their duty and their salvation. But they cannot cheat their Maker. The all-searching Eye surveys, with a terrible inspection, these workers of iniquity; and, at the final day, will be found to have traced every secret winding, every snaky path, every false pretence, and every flattering self-justi-

fication, of fraud. At that awful period, how many persons will be found to be cheats, who in this world sustained the character of fair dealers; and were regarded by all around them as honest men!

3. *Another class of Frauds, is attendant upon Bargains.*

These, like the former classes, are very numerous; and are varied continually by the circumstances of the Bargain, and the ingenuity, negligence, and dishonesty, of the parties.

An honest bargain is that, and that only, in which an Equivalent is given, and received; in which the value of the commodities in each case being supposed to be known, *the fair, market price is mutually allowed.* The market price is, in all ordinary circumstances, the equitable price; and, wherever it is known, will be cheerfully paid by an honest man. Where it cannot be known, such men will settle their contracts as equitably as they can: each designing faithfully to render an equivalent for what he receives. Every bargain, not formed on these principles, is unjust; and, if thus formed intentionally, is dishonest. But how different from these are the principles, upon which bargains are very extensively made in this country, and but too probably in others also!

Among the innumerable frauds, practised in this vast field of human business, I shall specify the following.

Multitudes of persons, when forming bargains, misrepresent, or conceal, the state of the markets. Most men profess to be willing to be governed in their dealings by the market price. But great numbers of these very men intend to buy for less, and sell for more. Hence they carefully conceal this price from those with whom they deal; and thus buy at diminished, and sell at enhanced, prices. This conduct is plain dishonesty; and would not deceive even the subject of it, were he not blinded by his own avarice. He perfectly knows, that his neighbour would not buy, nor sell, on these terms, except from his ignorance; and that the advantage, which he gains, is gained only from his neighbour's misapprehension of the commodities in question. Can an honest man take this advantage? Would any man of reputation justify himself in taking it of a child? Why not of a child, as well as of a man? Because, it will be answered, the child knows not the worth of what he buys, or sells. Neither, in the case specified, does the man. Would he, who takes this advantage, be willing that his neighbour should take it of *him?* The answer to this question needs not be given. It is plain, then, that the conduct referred to is unjust and fraudulent.

There are many other persons, *who directly misrepresent the market price.* These men feel satisfied, if they do not palpably lie; if, for example, they report what this price has lately been; what they have heard somebody declare it to be; or what price has been given by an individual, who has sold at a high, or bought at a low price; both, very different from the general one. All

these are mere fetches, used by a dishonest mind to deceive itself, and to defraud others.

Another palpable fraud of this class is *the use of false weights and measures*. These are often used, when they are *known*, and often when they are *suspected*, to be false; and more frequently still, when they are *suffered to become defective through inattention*. In this, the man is apt to feel himself excused, because he is not intentionally fraudulent; not remembering, that, whenever it is in his power, God has required him to *do justly*, and not merely *not to design to do unjustly*. He has given him no permission to sin through negligence. Weights and measures are often formed of such materials, as to ensure decay, and diminution. Whenever this is known to be the case, the proprietor is unpardonable, if he does not by frequent examinations prevent the injustice. The wrong he cannot but foresee; and the remedy is always, and entirely, in his power. If we love justice as we ought, we shall take all those measures, which are necessary to accomplish it. He, who is resolved to *do to others what he would that others should do to him*, will never suffer it to remain undone for want of exertions, which demand so little self-denial.

Whenever a man begins to do wrong through negligence, he will soon do it through design. Indifference to sin is the next step to the love of it. The only safety in this case, and all others of the like nature, is to *resist the beginnings of evil*. If our opposition to it be not begun here, it will never be begun. Every smaller transgression prepares the way for a greater. Every gross villain has become such by small beginnings. "No man," says the Latin proverb, "becomes abandoned at once." He, who begins to backslide without compunction, will find his remaining course only downward; and will descend with continually increasing velocity to the bottom.

Another prominent iniquity of this class is *Selling commodities, which are unsound and defective, under direct professions, that they are sound and good*. This is sometimes done with palpable lying; sometimes with indefinite and hypocritical insinuations. Agents, and men who buy to sell again, often assert their wares to be good, because those, of whom they received them, have declared them to be good. These declarations are often believed, because the agent professes, or at least appears, to believe them; while, in truth, he does not give them the least credit.

One of the grossest impositions of this nature is practised upon the public in advertising, and selling, nostrums as safe and valuable medicines. These are ushered into newspapers with a long train of pompous declarations, almost always false, and always delusive. The silly purchaser buys, and uses, the medicine, chiefly, or only, because it is sold by a respectable man, and under the sanction of a splendid advertisement, to which that respectable

man lends his countenance. Were such men to decline this unfortunate and indefensible employment, the medicines would probably fall into absolute discredit; and health, and limbs, and life, would in many instances be preserved from unnecessary destruction.

Another specimen of similar fraud is practised *in concealing the defects of what we sell.* This is the general art, and villany, of that class of men, who are customarily styled Jockeys: a class, unhappily comprehending multitudes, who would receive the appellation with astonishment and disdain. The common subterfuge of these men is this: "that they give no false accounts concerning their commodities; that the purchaser has eyes of his own, and must judge for himself." No defence can be more lame and wretched; and scarcely any, more impudent. A great proportion of vendibles are subject to defects, which no purchaser can descry. Every purchaser is, therefore, obliged to depend on the seller for information concerning them. All this the seller perfectly knows; and, if he be an honest man, will certainly give the information to the purchaser; because in the same situation he would wish it to be given to himself. At the same time, no purchaser would buy these articles, if he knew their defects, unless at a diminished price. The actual purchaser is, therefore, in colloquial language, *taken in;* and taken in by palpable villany.

Another specimen of the same nature is furnished by *the practice of depreciating the value of such commodities, as we wish to buy.* "*It is naught, it is naught,*" *saith the buyer; but, when he hath gone his way, he boasteth.* Such was the conduct of men in the days of *Solomon.* We have ample proof, that human nature, now, is not in this respect altered for the better. The ignorant, the modest, and the necessitous; persons, who should be the last to suffer from fraud; are in this way often made its victims. A decisive tone, and confident airs, in men better dressed, and supposed to know better, than themselves, easily bear down persons so circumstanced, and persuade them to sell their commodities for less than they are plainly worth. The purchaser, in the mean time, as soon as they are out of hearing, boasts of his gainful bargain; and trumpets, without a blush, the value of the articles, which he had before decried.

4. *Another class of frauds is connected with the Contraction, and Payment, of Debts.*

The first transgression of this nature, which I shall mention, *is the contraction of debts, with clear conviction, that we possess no means of discharging them; and that we shall, in all probability, possess no such means hereafter; at least, within any reasonable period of payment.* Multitudes of persons covet enjoyments, in the possession of others, to such a degree, that they are willing to acquire them, if they can, without troubling themselves about pay-

ing for them. Such persons are often professed cheats; and triumph in the success of their impositions. But there are others, who regard themselves as honest men; and would be not a little surprised, as well as wounded, at the suspicion of fraudulent designs in their conduct. Most, or all, of these men form some loose, indefinite design of paying their debts; but instead of providing the necessary means for this purpose, trust to some future casualty. They will tell the creditor, who charges them with dishonest conduct, that, although they did indeed know themselves to be destitute of property, and of any rational expectations of future property, when the debt was contracted, yet they hoped that in the course of events, they should, in some manner or other, become able to discharge it. In this case, they will add, they should have discharged it, both willingly and faithfully. What they thus allege is, probably, in many instances, true. The persons in question do not form a direct intention to defraud their creditors. Thus far their honesty goes. But here it stops. They form no design, direct or indirect, to take effectual measures to do their creditors justice. They do not conscientiously abstain from contracting debts, until they know, that they shall be able to cancel them by fair payment. On the contrary, they contract them, when they know themselves to be unable, and to be unpossessed of any fair probable means of being able at a future time. In all this they are, although often without suspecting it, grossly dishonest.

Another sin, very nearly akin to this, is *contracting debts, without perceiving any means of payment to be in our power.* Those, who transgress in this manner, feel satisfied, *if they do not know themselves to be unable to pay.* Were they evangelically honest, they would take effectual care to see whether they were able, or not. Often, by overrating their property, their efforts, or the markets, they feel a loose conviction, that they shall possess this power; but take no pains to render the fact certain, or even probable. Such morality can result only from absolute insensibility of mind to the great duty of doing justly; an entire ignorance of what it demands; and a total forgetfulness of exposure to the Divine indignation. We are bound, before we receive, before we become willing to receive, our neighbour's property, to know, that we have means, clearly probable, of paying him: otherwise, we wantonly subject him to the loss of it; and differ very little, as moral beings, from thieves and robbers. If we are in doubt concerning either the probability, or the sufficiency, of these means; it is our duty to detail them fairly to the person, with whom we are dealing. If, in this case, he is disposed to entrust us with his property, and we afterwards make faithful efforts to cancel the debt; I do not see, that we are chargeable with fraud, although we should fail. He who contracts a debt, without discerning that he has probable means of discharging it, differs in no material respect from a Swindler. *He* plunders his neighbour from indifference to

justice; *the Swindler* from contempt of it. In the view of common sense, in the sight of God, the moral character of both is essentially the same.

Another transgression of the same general nature, is *neglecting to pay our debts at the time.* There are many persons, whose general character, as honest men, is fair; who yet, in this respect, are extremely deserving of censure. They contract debts, which they engage to discharge within a given time. This time is, therefore, a part of the contract; a ground on which the bargain is made; a condition, on which the price was calculated. This obvious truth is understood by all men; and makes a part of the language of every bargain, in which credit is given. To the expectation, formed by the Creditor, of receiving his debt at the time specified, the Debtor has voluntarily given birth. It is an expectation, therefore, which he is bound to fulfil. If he does not take every lawful measure in his power, to enable himself to fulfil it; or if he does not fulfil it, when it is in his power; he is guilty of fraud; of depriving his neighbour, not perhaps of design, but by a guilty negligence, of a part of his property.

The delay of payment beyond the appointed time, is, in almost all instances, injurious, and, in some, almost as injurious to the creditor, as an absolute refusal to pay would originally have been. The real value of a debt, where the security is sufficient, is, among men of business, estimated according to the time, when the payment is reasonably expected. Thus notes, bonds, and other obligations for money, when given by men, known to be punctual in the discharge of their debts, pass in the market for their nominal value; and are received in payments with no other discount, than that which arises from the distance of the period, when they become due. Those given by negligent men are, on the contrary, considered as depreciated, from the beginning; and that, exactly in proportion to the negligence of the signer. Of this sum, be it what it may, the negligent man defrauds his creditor.

The Law of God required, in accordance with the doctrine, which I am urging, that the sun should not be suffered to go down upon the hire of the labourer. The Spirit of punctuality, here enjoined, ought to be found in all men. The engagements, which we make, we are bound, as honest men, to fulfil. The expectations which we knowingly excite in the minds of those, with whom we deal, we are required to satisfy: and, when we fail, either voluntarily or negligently, we are inexcusable.

The last iniquity of this species, which I shall mention, is *the payment of debts with something of less value, than that which we possess.*

It has been doubtless observed, that I have, all along throughout this discourse, chiefly passed over in silence those gross frauds, which are the direct objects of criminal prosecution. Such is my intention here. I shall pass by the gross iniquities of passing

counterfeit currency; forging obligations, and endorsements; and others of the like nature. To reprove these crimes cannot be necessary in this place. I have therefore confined, and shall still confine myself, to those which are esteemed smaller transgressions, and are less observed, and less dreaded, by mankind.

There are some kinds of currency, whose *real* value is inferior to that, which is *nominal*. Coin is in some countries, and at some times, alloyed below the common standard. It is, also, very often worn down below the standard weight. Paper-currency is, also, in many instances subjected to a discount, wherever its true value is understood. Debts are very often paid with this depreciated currency, without any notice given by the debtor of its depreciation.

Debts are paid, also, to a considerable extent in commodities. In these there are often defects, in kind, or quantity, not readily perceivable by the creditor, and, what is much more unhappy, concealed, or not disclosed by the debtor.

Often, debts are paid by labour and services. These, not unfrequently, are stinted with respect to the time, through which the labour ought to extend; the skill, and thorough execution, which ought to be employed; the care, which ought to be used; and, universally, the completeness of the service engaged, and therefore justly expected, by the creditor. In every case of this nature, it is the design of the debtor to gain something by the means, and mode, of paying the debt, which he would not have gained, had he paid it in undebased coin; and which he would not have gained by a fair, honest fulfilment of the original terms of the contract. Whenever the debtor feels, that in discharging his debts he has acquired something from the creditor, not involved in the plain terms of the contract, he may be assured, that his mode of payment has involved in it a fraud, and that he has acted the part of a cheat.

All these may, and often do, seem to the perpetrators, crimes of little moment: and it will, perhaps, be no easy matter to convince them of the contrary. I wish such persons to remember the great maxim, taught by the unvarying experience of man; that he, who allows himself to be dishonest in one thing, will soon be dishonest in all things. I wish them still more solemnly to remember, that God is a witness of all their fraudulent conduct, however it may be concealed from mankind; and that, although they may cheat men, they cannot cheat God.

5. *Another enormous class of frauds is composed of Breaches of Trust.*

Upon this unlimited subject my observations must be few, and summary. Frauds of this kind are found in the servant and the monarch, and in all the intervening classes of mankind. They fill with complaints every mouth; and haunt every human concern. To describe them, would demand the contents of a library: to name them, would be to recount most of the business of man. As

they exist every where; so all men are familiarized to them. Of course, it is the less necessary to detail them here. There is, also, but one opinion concerning them, and concerning their authors. They are all by the universal voice pronounced to be frauds; and their authors to be knaves and villains.

He. who assumes an employment, engages in the very assumption to discharge the duties, which it obviously involves. If he fails, he fails of his duty; if he negligently, or voluntarily, fails; he is, palpably, a dishonest man. The expectations, which we knowingly excite in others, we are indispensably bound to fulfil. Nothing less than this, will satisfy the commands of God, or the dictates of an unwarped Conscience. Nothing less will ever acquire, or secure, a fair reputation. I shall only add, that there is no easy or sure method of accomplishing this invaluable object, but *to begin early, and to go on with inflexible perseverance.*

REMARKS.

1. *The Subject, which has been under consideration, presents us with a very humiliating and painful specimen of human corruption.*

The duty of rendering justice to our neighbour, is one of the plainest dictates of the law, written on the hearts of men; one of the first demands of conscience; one of the prime injunctions of God. Accordingly, no duty has been more readily, universally, or absolutely, acknowledged, or demanded, by mankind. The bounds, also, which separate justice from injustice, are often defined with mathematical exactness, almost always clearly known, and rarely capable of being mistaken. Yet in how many ways, forms, and varieties, is this duty violated! By how many individuals! Of how many classes! Who, however wise, honourable, or excellent, however reverenced, or beloved, is not, at times, the victim of fraud, and the dupe of cunning! The known instances are innumerable. What endless multitudes are probably unknown, except by the Omniscient Eye! How great a part of human time and talents has been employed only in Fraud! One hundred and twenty thousand persons, in the City of *London* alone, are declared by the judicious *Calhoun* to derive the whole, or the chief part, of their subsistence from fraudulent practices. Here, villany of this nature has become a science; and is pursued, not merely without remorse, but with system; with a coolness, which laughs at morality; an ingenuity, which baffles detection; and industry, which would do honour to virtue; and a success, which overwhelms the mind with amazement. All these things exist in the Capital of that country, which has been more distinguished, than any other, for knowledge, morality, and Religion.

But *London* is not alone concerned in this iniquity. It prevails wherever rights are claimed, or property exists. In our own country, so young, and distinguished beyond most others for the moral character of its inhabitants, it prevails in a manner, which

ought to cover us with shame and sorrow. Frauds, of all the kinds which have been mentioned, are not only practised, but avowed. Nay, many of them have ceased to wear the name of frauds. Oppressive bargains are customarily styled by those, who make them, *good bargains;* and boasted of as specimens of ingenuity, skill, and success. Debts, in multiplied instances, are contracted without honesty; and withholden by mere fraud. Even the settlement of estates furnishes, often, gross exhibitions of oppression and cheating; and the widow and the fatherless are made a prey. Why is this done? Because the deceased is gone, and cannot detect the iniquity; because those, whom he has left behind, are without defence, and without remedy.

A great part of the business of Legislators is the prevention of fraud. To detect and punish it, is the chief employment of Judicial tribunals. How immense have been the labours of both; and to how vast an extent have they laboured in vain!

How frequently do we ourselves see character, safety, and the soul, all hazarded for a pittance of gain, contemptible in itself; and of no consequence to him who cheats his neighbour, and sells himself, to acquire it! With what unceasing toil, and under what hard bondage, does the miser wear and waste his life, to filch from those around him little gleanings of property, merely to bury it in his chest, and without daring to use it for himself or his family! How frequently do swindlers, and gamblers, like the troubled ghosts of antiquity, haunt places of public resort; and stare in open day, and in circles of decent men, until the hour of darkness arrives; when they may again, like their kindred vampyres, satiate themselves upon rottenness and corruption!

How often is war made; how often are oceans of blood spilt; lives destroyed in millions; and immense portions of human happiness extinguished; merely to plunder others of their property!

To all these evils, instruction, example, laws, punishments, conscience, the Word of God, and the prospect of damnation, oppose their force and terror in vain. Prudence and policy contend against it with as little success. All nations have pronounced honesty to be more profitable than any other conduct. Poverty on the one hand, and infamy on the other, have ever threatened the intentional knave with a whip of scorpions. Still, he walks onward coolly, and steadily, unmoved either by the remonstrances of earth and Heaven, or the dangers of Hell.

2. *These observations show the vast importance of fixing in our own minds, and in the minds of our children, the strongest sense, and the most vigorous habits, of exact, Evangelical Integrity.*

He, who wishes to live well here, and to be happy hereafter, must in all his intentional dealings ask, as an all-controlling question, What is right? and make all things bend to the answer. "*Fiat*

justitia; ruat cælum," ought to be the governing maxim of private as well as public life. Of all virtues, Justice and Truth are the first in order, the first in importance. To them every thing ought to give way. If they are permitted to rule, man cannot fail to be virtuous, amiable, and happy.

But every moral truth, and every moral precept, is of more consequence to children, and may be made of more use to them, than it can be to others. Good seed, sown in the spring-time of life, cannot ordinarily fail to produce a harvest; which will be vainly expected, if it be sown in the autumn. The parent, who values the comfort, character, or salvation, of his child, will impress on his young and tender mind, in the most affecting manner possible, the incalculable excellence and importance of integrity, and the inestimable worth of an unblemished character, and an unsullied life. At this hopeful period, the parent should inweave into the mind of the child, as a part of his constitutional thinking, a strong conviction, that property itself, according to the usual dispensations of God, is to be acquired only by uprightness of conduct; and that fraud is the highway to beggary, as well as to shame. Peace of conscience, he should be taught from the first, can never dwell in the same soul with injustice: and without peace of conscience, he should know, the soul will be poor and miserable. Habitually should he remember, that the Eye of God looks alway upon the heart; and that every dishonest design, word, and act, is recorded in that book, out of which he will be judged at the great day. Finally, he should learn the unvarying fact; that one fraud generates another of course; and that thus the dishonest man corrupts, unceasingly, his heart and his life, and is seen by all around him to be *a vessel of wrath*, daily *fitting for destruction*. All these instructions, example should enforce, and sanction: and on them all prayer should invoke its efficacious blessings.

3. *These observations teach us how greatly such, as are customarily styled Moral men, deceive themselves.*

Multitudes of men, who sustain this character, censure Preachers for dwelling so frequently on *the Doctrines* of the Gospel, and for not introducing, oftener, its *moral precepts* into their Sermons. These persons regard themselves as being moral in the proper sense; and wish preachers to inculcate just such morality, as they themselves practise. They pay their debts, and wish other men to pay theirs; keep true accounts; sell at the market prices; make as good bargains as they can; and get as much money as they can, in this manner. These are the things, which they wish preachers to inculcate.

Such persons are yet to learn, that the Morality of the Gospel is wonderfully different from all this. It includes whatever I have said, in this and the preceding discourses, concerning the Law of God; whatever I shall say in the succeeding ones; and more than I have said, or can say, in both. The Morality of the Gospel be-

gins in an honest and good heart, disposed to *render* alway, and exactly, to our neighbour *the things that are* our neighbour's, *and to God the things that are God's.* It knows not, it disdains, it abominates, the tricks, the fetches, the disguises, the concealments, the enhancements, the delays of payment, the depreciated payments, the base gains, and the double-minded character, always found in the coarse-spun morality of this world. Worldly Morality aims supremely, and only, at *being rich;* Evangelical Morality at *doing that, which is right.* Every person satisfied with worldly morality, who hears this sermon, will probably go away from it, displeased with what he will call its rigidness; and discontented to find, that what he has been accustomed to think his own stronghold, furnishes him with so little either of safety or comfort. But let him remember, that, whether he is pleased or displeased, no Morality, short of this, will answer the demands of the Law of God.

SERMON CXXIV.

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.—GAMING.

EXODUS XX. 15.—*Thou shalt not steal.*

THE *Frauds practised by men upon themselves, and their families;* and *a variety of Frauds, perpetrated by mankind upon each other*, have occupied the two preceding discourses.

I shall now proceed to the consideration of another Fraud of this latter class; viz. *Gaming*.

Multitudes of persons professedly believe Gaming to be innocent; and accordingly labour not a little to justify it to others. As they aim to clear it from all imputations of criminality; it will be both proper, and necessary, to consider the subject generally; that its advocates may perceive, that it is not only fraudulent, but sinful in many other respects.

The Observations, which I shall make on this subject, will be arranged under the following Heads.

I. *The Evils of Gaming, which immediately respect Others;* and,

II. *Those, which immediately respect Ourselves.*

Among the evils, which respect others, I observe,

1. *That Gaming is, in all instances, Fraud.*

By *Gaming*, here, I intend *that only, by which property is won or lost;* and this property, by which party soever acquired, I assert to be acquired, invariably by fraud.

There are but two possible methods, by which we can acquire property from others honestly; viz. *either by free gift; or by rendering an equivalent for what we receive.* I need not say, that property, won by Gaming, is not obtained in either of these ways. That, which is acquired, neither is, nor is intended to be, given: and instead of an equivalent, the Gamester renders nothing for what he has received.

God in the Decalogue, has absolutely bound us *not to covet any thing, which is our neighbour's.* This sin of coveting, every Gamester is guilty of, when he sits down to win the property of his neighbour. Of this truth he gives unanswerable evidence in many ways. To win the property in question, is the only motive, for which he spends his hours at the card-table, and the dice-box. At the same time, he sees his companion afflicted, suffering, and even ruined, by the loss of his property, without restoring, or thinking of restoring, to him any part of what he has lost. Did he not covet this property, the most vulgar humanity would induce

him to relieve distresses, the relief of which would demand only the sacrifice of what he did not wish to retain. Instead of this, however, we always find him speak of his winnings, when valuable, with self-gratulation and triumph; and plainly considering them as acquisitions of no small importance to his own happiness. The Gamester, therefore, sinfully covets the property of his neighbour. The design to obtain it without rendering an equivalent, is in its nature fraudulent; and will be admitted into his mind by no honest man. But this design every Gamester cherishes; and the indulgence, and execution of it, spends the principal part of his life. His life is, therefore, an almost uninterrupted course of fraud. To render this career complete, the Gamester spends a great part of his time in contrivances, and labours, to get, and in actually getting, the property of others for nothing. This is the very crime of the cheat, the swindler, and the thief. If the thief, when he stole; the cheat, when he bargained; and the swindler, when he borrowed his neighbour's property, voluntarily left an equivalent; how obvious is it, that his crime, though I acknowledge he might even then be in some degree criminal, would hardly be mentioned, and scarcely regarded as an immorality. The main turpitude in every one of these cases is plainly the desiring, and the taking, of our neighbour's property without an equivalent. But this turpitude is entirely chargeable to the Gamester.

It may, however, be said, that all the other persons, mentioned, take the property in question, *covertly;* while the Gamester takes it *openly*, and therefore fairly. So, I answer, does the robber.

It will be further said, that these persons take the property *without* the consent of the owner: whereas the Gamester wins it, only *with* his consent. As I suppose this to be the strong-hold of all, who advocate the lawfulness of Gaming, it will be proper to consider it with some attention.

In the first place, then, *this consent is never given in the manner,* professedly *alleged by those who defend the practice.*

No man ever sat down to a game, with an entire consent, that his antagonist should win his property. I speak of those cases only, in which the property staked is considered as of some serious importance. Every person, who is a party in a game of this nature, intends to win the property of his antagonist, and not to lose his own. His own he stakes, only because the stake is absolutely necessary to enable him to win that of his antagonist. Thus, instead of consenting to lose his own property, each of the parties intends merely to obtain that of his neighbour for nothing. This is the only real design of both: and this design is as unjust, and as fraudulent, as any, which respects property, can be. That such is the only real design, the loser proves, in the clearest manner, by deeply lamenting his loss; and the winner, in a manner little less clear, by exulting in his gain.

Secondly. *Each of the parties expects only to win; either by superior skill, or superior good-fortune.*

No man ever heard of a Gamester, who sat down to play with a decided expectation of losing.

Thirdly. *No man has a right to yield his property to another on this condition.*

The property of every man is given to him by his Creator, as to a steward; to be employed only in useful purposes. In such purposes he is indispensably bound to employ it. Every other mode of employing it is inexcusable. This doctrine I presume the Gamester himself will not seriously question. The man must be lost to decency, and to common sense, who can for a moment believe, that his Creator has given any blessing to mankind for any purposes, except those which are useful; or that himself, and every one of his fellow-men, are not unconditionally required by God to promote useful purposes with all the means in their power; and with their property, equally with other means at all times. But it will not be pretended, that staking property on the issue of a game, is an employment of that property to any purpose, which God will pronounce to be useful. In *his* sight, therefore, no man can lawfully employ his property in this manner. Of course both parties, in thus staking their money, are guilty of sin: while each also invites, and seduces, the other to sin.

Fourthly. *Every man is plainly bound to devote his property to that purpose, which, all things considered, appears to be the best of those, which are within his reach.*

By this I do not mean that, which is best in the abstract; but best for *him*, in the sphere of action, allotted to him by his Maker. In other words, every man is bound to do with his property, as well as his other talents, the most good in his power. I am well aware, that this subject cannot be mathematically estimated; that, in many cases, the mind of a wise and good man may be at a loss to determine; and that the determination must be left to personal discretion. But, in the present case, there can be neither difficulty, nor doubt. No man will pretend, that losing his money to a Gamester, is disposing of it in such a manner, as to promote the best purpose in his power. If he needs it himself; it will be more useful to him to keep it still in his possession. If he does not need it; it will be incomparably better to give it to those who do. To impart it, thus, to a Gamester, always a vicious man, often a profligate, and always a squanderer; a man known to employ his money for sinful purposes only; can never be useful, nor even vindicable, in any sense. The proof of this is complete. No man ever thought of making a Gamester, *as such*, an object of alms-giving. To other prodigals, to idlers, and even to drunkards, alms, at times, are given. But the most enlarged charity never dreamed of finding a proper object of its bounty in a gamester. To stake money in this manner, therefore, is so far from

employing it in the best manner which is in the owner's power, that it is employing it in a manner, indefensible, and in every respect sinful.

From these considerations it is plain, that this argument in favour of Gaming cannot avail to the purpose, for which it is adduced. On the contrary, it only contributes to exhibit the sinfulness of Gaming in a new light.

It often happens, and almost always in the beginning of this practice, that the Gamesters are youths; and that the property, which they stake, belongs to their parents. This property is never entrusted to children for the purpose of Gaming. *They* receive, and *their parents* communicate, it for some valuable end; in which the promotion of their comfort and welfare was concerned. In receiving it, the children engaged, either expressly, or implicitly, to use it for this end. In staking it, therefore, at the Gaming-table, the child is guilty of a gross breach of good faith; and literally robs his parents of their property. And *he*, says Solomon, *who robbeth his father, or his mother, and saith it is no sin, is the fit companion of a murderer.**

2. *The Gamester ruins multitudes of his fellow-men, and injures deeply multitudes more.*

By this I intend, that he plunders them of their property, and reduces them to beggary. The whole history of Gaming is a mere record of this ruin. It is also completely evinced by daily observation. The bankruptcies, continually brought upon mankind in this manner, are innumerable; particularly upon the young, the ignorant, the thoughtless, and the giddy. He, who can coolly sit down to the ruin, or even to the serious injury, of one of his fellow-men, is an arrant villain; equally destitute of common good-will, and common honesty.

3. *The Gamester corrupts others by his Example; and thus entails upon them moral ruin.*

One sinner, saith the Wise man, *destroyeth much good.* In no manner, is this terrible mischief accomplished so extensively, and so effectually, as by an evil example. Gamesters are always wicked men, totally destitute of principle, and sunk far below the common level of corruption. To this degree of turpitude every Gamester reduces all those, who become his companions. The ruin, here accomplished, is infinitely more dreadful than that, mentioned under the preceding head. It is the endless ruin of the soul; the destruction of every enjoyment, and every hope. All other injuries, compared with it, are *nothing, and less than nothing.* With the guilt of accomplishing this stupendous evil, the Gamester is wholly chargeable; and for this guilt he will be compelled to answer at the final day. What sober man, nay, what profligate, would not tremble at the thought of assuming this responsibility?

* Prov. xxiii. 24. (Hodgson.)

But the Gamester coolly and quietly makes himself answerable, not for the ruin of one soul, but of multitudes.

4. *The Gamester ruins his family.*

The Gamester voluntarily, and causelessly, exposes himself to beggary. In this conduct he sets afloat, without any security, and against every rational hope, the property, on which his wife and children are to be supported, and by which his children are to be educated, and settled for life. Almost every Gamester is ruined by play. By this disaster, both the comforts and the hopes of his family are destroyed; their spirits broken, and lost; and all their efforts to gain character and subsistence, prevented. But, *if any man provide not for his own, especially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an Infidel.* What then shall be said of the man, who squanders in this useless and guilty manner, all that himself or his ancestors have provided? To the mere lust of Gaming he sacrifices the property, on which his family might subsist with comfort and reputation, by which they might be educated to usefulness and honour, and by which they might be settled advantageously in life. To this lust, therefore, he sacrifices their subsistence, their hopes, their all.

In the mean time, he performs few, or none, of the great duties of a parent. He does not instruct: he does not govern: he cannot reprove: he cannot pray *with* his children: he cannot pray *for* them.

His example is only pernicious. He keeps the worst hours; frequents the worst places; attaches himself to the worst company; and thus, taking his children by the hand, conducts them to the same certain means of destruction.

His character, therefore, contemptible and odious in itself, must be seen by them to be contemptible. Instead of the privilege, and blessing, always enjoyed in beholding a worthy, pious, and venerable father, they suffer the deplorable calamity of seeing him, who stands in this affecting relation, a curse to themselves, and a nuisance to mankind.

II. *I shall now consider those evils of Gaming, which immediately respect Ourselves.*

These evils are very numerous, as well as very important. The

1. *Which I shall mention, is, that it is a waste of Time.*

The only light, in which Gaming is commonly regarded as justifiable, is that of *Amusement*. Amusements mankind certainly need; and what they need is lawful. But Gaming is not rendered lawful by this consideration.

Every lawful amusement is of such a nature, as to refresh, and invigorate, either the body, or the mind. But Gaming does neither. That it does not refresh the body is too obvious to demand either proof, or assertion. Equally certain is it, that it does not refresh, nor invigorate the mind. It furnishes no valuable information: it

adds no strength to the reasoning powers. So far as it has influence at all, it wearies the intellectual faculties; and is attended with all the fatigue, but with no part of the benefit, which is experienced in severe study.

It neither sweetens, nor enlivens, the temper. On the contrary, it is a grave, dull, spiritless employment; at which almost all persons lose their cheerfulness, and impair their native sweetness of disposition; in which the temper is soured; and in which gloom and moroseness, and frequently envy and malice, are not only created, but strengthened into immoveable habits. Gamesters, I know, herd together. But it is without good-will, or social feelings; and merely because Gaming makes it necessary. Their minds are engrossed, but not invigorated. Their time is ardently, and anxiously, but not cheerfully, employed. They flock to the Gaming-table, just as the hermit and the thief return to their respective employments; because habit has made these employments necessary to them: although the hermit, if he would make the experiment, would be happier in society; and the thief, as an honest man.

All the real pleasure found in Gaming, except that which arises from the love of sin, is found in the acquisition of money; or the pride of victory, and the superior skill; or the fortunate chance, from which it is derived. All these are base and sordid sources of pleasure. Gaming, then, is not an useful, and of course, not a justifiable, amusement.

In the mean while, all the time, employed in it, is wasted and lost. This loss is immense. No man can answer for it to his Maker: no man can repair the injury, which is done to himself. It cannot be too often said, nor too strongly realized, that time is the most valuable of all things: since on the proper employment of it depends every blessing, which we are capable of receiving. He, who wastes it, as every Gamester does, is guilty of a prodigality, which cannot be estimated. All men are bound by the most solemn obligations to *redeem their time;* that is, to make the most profitable use of every day. But Gaming is profitable for nothing. For, if it is useless as an amusement, it is absolutely useless.

2. *Gaming is a wanton waste of our Faculties, and Privileges.*

Every faculty, and every privilege, was given to us, only that we might promote the glory of God, and the real good of ourselves and our fellow-men. From labouring alway to these ends, there is no exemption, and no excuse. *Whether ye eat, or drink,* saith *St. Paul, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God. To him, who by a patient continuance in well-doing, seeks for glory, honour, and immortality,* and to him only, is promised *eternal life.* Our faculties are our understanding, our affections, and our energy. Our privileges are the means of education, knowledge, virtue, usefulness, and enjoyment. But none of our faculties is benefited by

Gaming. The understanding is not enlarged: the affections are not improved: the energy is not invigorated: while all these privileges are, at the same time, abused and thrown away. How great a waste of what mighty blessings is here! How entire a frustration of the end of our being! With a due improvement of his faculties and privileges, every man may become wise and virtuous. How incalculable is the difference between such a man, and a Gamester!

A glorious privilege, the result of all those which have been mentioned, is *that of doing our duty*. But Gaming is in itself, and in its consequences, an entire omission of all duty. With industry and economy, the whole life of a Gamester is at war. His prime employment cherishes, unceasingly, gross appetites, and gross passions; and forces him to be a stranger to *self-government*. Into the heart of a man, engrossed by schemes of acquiring the property of his neighbour by the throwing of dice, and the shuffling of cards, it is impossible, that *benevolence* should enter. In acts of *beneficence*, hands, which have so long been made the instruments of covetousness and plunder, can never be employed.

No Gamester was ever a man of *piety*, so long as he was a Gamester.

Of no Gamester can it be said, *Behold he prayeth!* The very first step towards the assumption of this character must be deep repentance for his gross and guilty life, accompanied by an entire self-abhorrence, and followed by a vigorous reformation.

3. *Gaming is a wanton and wicked waste of Property.*

The end, for which our property was given, is the same, to which our faculties and privileges are destined. To this end, to some purpose, really acceptable to God, and really useful to ourselves and others, it can always be applied. There never was a situation in which, there never was a man by whom, all his property could not be devoted to some useful purpose within his reach. But squandering money at the Gaming-table is of no use either to the loser, or the winner. If the loser has common sense; he can take no pleasure in his losses. If the winner has common honesty; he can take no pleasure in his gains. Beside the suffering, involved in his immediate losses, the loser forms a pernicious habit of undervaluing property; and cuts himself off both from doing, and enjoying, that good, which the property lost might have procured. Nor is the winner more happily affected. From winning often, especially when in straitened circumstances, he soon acquires full confidence, that he shall win, whenever it is necessary. Hence he expends what he has gained on objects of no value. "*Male parta male dilabuntur*," is probably a maxim in every nation; and is verified by all human experience.

With habits of this nature, we cannot wonder, that Gamesters, such, I mean, as devote themselves to this employment, universally

become beggars. *Wealth*, says *Solomon, gotten by vanity, is diminished:* that is, wealth acquired by vain and dishonest courses of life. *Drowsiness*, says the same profound observer of human life, and manners, *will clothe a man with rags. Drowsiness*, here, intends that course of conduct, which, in opposition to the steady energy, and vigorous efforts, of industry, aims at obtaining a subsistence by dishonest and low-minded arts. Such were the facts three thousand years ago. Such are the facts at the present hour. In the whole list of jockeys and sharpers it is rare, in this, and probably in all other countries, that we find a man, possessed of even moderate property. Those, who are most successful, acquire such habits of expense, such expectations of supplying their wants by playing, at any time, and, consequently, such a contempt for economy, and even for common prudence, that they become poor, of course. The old age of a Gamester is the cold and comfortless evening of a forlorn and miserable day.

4. *Gaming is the destruction of Character.*

A good name, says *Solomon, is better than great riches, and loving favour, than silver and gold.* A fair, unblemished reputation is one of the chief blessings of man: one of his prime enjoyments; one of his principal means of usefulness. Without it he can obtain neither influence, nor confidence; neither profitable employments, nor real friends. But no Gamester was ever respected, *as such.* Whatever talents, or advantages, he may otherwise have possessed, his character has been always sunk by his gaming. Look around the world, and judge for yourselves. You never knew, and therefore never will know, a Gamester, who, in this character, was regarded by his neighbours with esteem. Common sense steadily attaches disgrace to the name. So conscious of this fact are the whole class of Gamesters, that they usually take effectual pains to carry on their wretched employment in scenes of solitude and secrecy, where they are effectually hidden from the eyes of mankind.

But who, that possesses common sobriety, or even sanity of mind; who, that is not a fair candidate for bedlam; would voluntarily destroy the blessings of his own good name? The *Slanderer*, who blasts the reputation of another, is universally, and justly, regarded with abhorrence. What the slanderer does for another, the Gamester does for himself. The slanderer is a vile and abominable wretch. In what respect is the Gamester less vile and abominable? The slanderer is an assassin: the Gamester is a suicide.

5. *Gaming is the direct road to many other sins.*

Every Gamester, with too few exceptions to deserve notice, becomes a sharper, of course. High expectations of acquiring property suddenly, distressing disappointments, great gains, and great losses instantaneously experienced, strong hopes alternated with strong fears, and holding the mind, habitually, in a state of

anxious suspense, regularly prove too powerful for the honesty of every man, who has not too much virtue to be a Gamester. By what is called *fair play* he fails of being successful. A series of ill success tempts him to play *unfairly*. Ultimately, he is charged with it. He denies it; and is thus guilty of falsehood. The charge is reiterated. He swears to the truth of his denial; and is thus guilty of perjury. His oath is doubted. He becomes angry, profane, and furious; and not unfrequently engages in a quarrel, to vindicate his wounded honour. At times, the dispute is terminated by a duel. In all ordinary circumstances, his affections become sour, and his mind envious at the success of his companions, and malicious towards their persons. At the same time, he is prompted to murmur at his ill-success; to curse what he calls his luck, but what is in truth a dispensation of God; and to adopt a course of profane, blasphemous, and fiend-like language. To close this wretched detail; the Gamester very often terminates his miserable career with drunkenness, and not unfrequently with self-murder. Who, that is not lost to every hope of virtue; who, that is not lost to common sense and common feeling; can be willing to thrust himself into a course of life, or into the entrance upon a course of life, which presents at the very gate, most formidable temptations to these enormous sins? Who would be willing that a father, a husband, a brother, or a son, should be guilty of these sins, or exposed to these temptations? This question will, probably, never be answered. Will it then be said, that men are found, who love these relations better than themselves? It will not be said. But it must be said, because it is true, that multitudes of men resort to the Gaming-table with an infantine giddiness of mind; a hare-brained spirit of adventure; a greedy avarice; and a treacherous confidence in their own watchfulness against temptation; in that prudent care, which, always seen with microscopic eyes, they consider as abundantly sufficient to secure themselves from every danger. Thus, while *the* really *prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself*, these *simple*, self-deceived beings, *pass on, and are punished.*

From these considerations it is, if I mistake not, evident beyond debate, that Gaming is a gross fraud; that in many other points of view, it is an enormous sin; and that it is, in an alarming degree, fatal to all the real interests of man. There are, however, persons, who, because they escape some of the dangers, and avoid some of the iniquities, connected with this practice, will flatter themselves, that they are scarcely chargeable with the rest. They may not claim the character of virtue; but they will insist, that their conduct is almost, if not entirely, innocent; and will at least believe themselves, if guilty at all, to be guilty only in a very minute degree. To these persons let me seriously address the following considerations.

In the first place. *Gaming is an appearance of evil.*

Abstain from all appearance of evil, is a command of the same God, who said, *Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart;* and is, therefore, armed with the same authority. But every person of piety, and almost every sober man, pronounces Gaming *to be an evil.* It cannot, therefore, be denied to be *an appearance of evil.* By the arguments here advanced, it has been shown, unless I am deceived, to be a real, and dreadful, evil. That every man, therefore, is bound to abstain from it, cannot be questioned.

Secondly. *Every Gamester feels it to be an evil.*

In all the early parts of his addiction to this course of life, he will find himself frequently employed, if he has any moral principles at all, in devising arguments, and excuses, to quiet his own conscience, and justify himself to others. This is not the conduct of a man, who feels himself innocent. No person ever sought an excuse for prayer; for honest industry; for the pious education of children; or for a faithful attendance on the public worship of God. Most persons, at the Gaming-table, are sensibly disturbed by the unexpected presence of a wise and good man. But such persons create no disturbance in the minds of those, who believe themselves to be virtuously employed. Were the Redeemer of mankind again upon earth; no person, who acknowledged his character, would be willing to be found by him at a Gaming-table.

Thirdly. *Gaming cannot be prayed for.*

Nothing can be right, or innocent, for which we cannot pray. In all pursuits, which he believes to be justifiable, every man can without difficulty ask for the blessing of God. But no man ever asked, no man ever will ask; that is, seriously and solemnly, or in other words, really; for the blessing of God upon the employment of Gaming. But that, which cannot be prayed for, is sinful.

Fourthly. *Neither Gaming, nor the circumstances which regularly attend it, can be recited at the Day of Judgment.*

I call upon every Gamester solemnly to consider, whether he will be able to come before *the Judge of the quick and the dead*, and declare to Him with confidence, or even with hope, that he has spent life, or any part of it, in the business of Gaming. But the conduct, which cannot be rehearsed then, cannot be right now. Who can soberly approve, in this world, of that, which will condemn him in the world to come?

There are many persons, who condemn what is called *Gambling*, or *Gaming for money*, and who yet appear to think themselves justified in *Gaming for mere amusement.* Let me exhort all such persons to remember, that whatever influence this conduct may have upon themselves, *it will, as an example, be pernicious to others.* Multitudes will know that they game, who will never know that they do not game for money. Multitudes, also, will be

either unable, or uninclined, to make any serious distinction between these kinds of conduct. All these will directly plead the example as a justification of themselves, or at least as a palliation of their own guilt. This will peculiarly be the fact, where the persons concerned are persons of reputation: and, unfortunately, a considerable number of those, who employ themselves in Gaming for amusement, are of this character. The example of one such person will be pleaded by all who know it. Under the wing of one such man, a multitude of Gamblers, almost all of whom are without reputation, and great numbers, low, contemptible beings, will gather; and feel themselves brooded in safety, and secured from the dreaded intrusions of public censure. Were Gambling unfurnished with reputable and fashionable examples, it would, I think, be easily exterminated from the world. Every person, possessed of a generally fair character, may therefore feel assured, that, if he games for amusement, he is one of the means, and not a small one, of keeping Gambling alive among mankind; and that he contributes, efficaciously, to the existence of all the sin, and all the misery, which it will produce at future periods.

To these observations it will probably be replied, "*Must I deny myself an innocent pleasure, because my neighbour is pleased to make a bad use of my example?*" St. Paul has long since answered this question. *For meat, destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man, who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.* Rom. xiv. 20, 21. And again, 1 Cor. viii. 13, *Wherefore, if meat make my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth; lest I make my brother to offend.* However innocent Gaming for amusement may be, it cannot be more innocent than *eating flesh*, than doing that, which the Apostle has pronounced *pure*. Yet the Apostle, and God who inspired him, have declared, that whatever occasions our brother to stumble, or fall into sin, it is good not to do, however innocent it may be otherwise: and the Apostle has declared, that he would not do this, even though *eating flesh*, so innocent, so directly allowed by God, and so important as food for man, were the thing in question; no, *not while the world standeth.* Nay, he has further declared in the verse preceding that, last quoted, that, when in such cases *we wound the weak conscience of our brother, we sin against Christ.* All this he declares concerning eating flesh, and concerning every other innocent thing. If then *our Gaming for amusement* be what it cannot fail to be, *a cause of inducing others to Game for money*, to become Gamesters, and to fall into any or all of these sins; then in Gaming for amusement we sin against Christ by wounding the conscience of our weaker brethren, and becoming the direct means of tempting them to sin.

The supposition here made is, however, false. Gaming for amusement, *in such as are either partially, or wholly. Games of*

chance, particularly with cards and dice, is not, and cannot be innocent. It is, almost of course, a sinful waste of time. As an amusement it is unnecessary and useless. It refreshes neither the mind, nor the body; and fails, therefore, essentially of being a lawful amusement. Better amusements can always be substituted for it; particularly *exercise, reading*, and *conversation;* and among amusements, as well as among employments, we are bound to select the best in our power. The controversy, the hope of victory, the reluctance to be vanquished; and, universally, that continual state of suspense and anxiety, always experienced in Gaming; have, although in a less degree, substantially the same influence on the mind, and are furnished with the same temptations, which are found in Gaming for money. In addition to these things, Gaming for money is almost always the consequence of an addiction to Gaming for amusement. The expectation, that we shall be able to withstand the allurements, by which others have fallen, is a mere and ruinous presumption; the presumption of *a man, wise in his own conceit;* of whom *there is less hope* than *of a fool.* The probabilities, that we shall fall where so many have fallen, are millions to one; and the contrary opinion is only a dream of lunacy. At the same time, no man can stand up in his closet, before his Maker, and thank him for the privilege of Gaming to-day, or ask his blessing, to enable him to game to-morrow.

But the influence of example is abundantly sufficient to prove the sinfulness of Gaming for amusement. Call to mind the extent, to which this evil has spread. Think what amazing multitudes have been corrupted, distressed, and ruined, by it for this world, and that which is to come. Think how many families have been plunged by it in beggary, and overwhelmed by it in vice. Think how many persons have become liars, at the Gaming-table; how many perjured; how many drunkards; how many blasphemers; how many suicides. "*If Europe,*" said *Montesquieu,* "*is to be ruined; it will be ruined by Gaming.*" Remember, that, unless persons of reputation gamed for amusement, persons without reputation would soon cease to game for money. Then call to mind, that *your* example is one of the means, which produce all these evils, and continue the practice, together with its miserable consequences, in the world. Remember, that you set the snare, spread the corruption, and effectuate the ruin; that you help to fill the world with wretchedness and sin, and both allure, and lead, your fellow-men to final perdition. With these plain and solemn truths in full view, look up to God; and, if you can, declare that there is no sin in Gaming for Amusement.

SERMON CXXV.

NINTH COMMANDMENT.—THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF TRUTH AND VERACITY.

EXODUS XX. 16.—*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

THE preceding Command was intended to secure *Justice* to mankind: this was intended to establish *Truth.*

The word *Truth* denotes, among other things,

1. *Such Declarations, as are accordant with the real state of things:*

2. *That division of Truth, which is called Moral, or Evangelical:*

3. *Veracity; or a disposition to speak Truth:*

4. *Faithfulness; or a disposition to fulfil, exactly, Promises, Trusts, and Covenants.*

Under this Command are properly ranged the following Subjects.

I. *Truth;*

II. *Lying;*

III. *Perjury;* and

IV. *Slander.*

These I propose to consider in the order specified.

The first of them, viz. *Truth*, shall occupy the present discourse. In examining it, it is my design to consider *the Nature and Importance of Truth, and the Importance of Veracity.*

Concerning the former of these Subjects I observe,

1. *That Truth is an account of the real state of things.*

Mathematical Truth is an account of the real state of Number, and Quantity, together with their various relations; *Philosophical Truth*, understood in the natural sense, of Material bodies, and their operations; and *Moral Truth*, of Intelligent beings, their relations, their duties, and their actions.

The real state of things is that, with which only we have any concern: and with this our concern is infinite. In the present world, so far as the present world is concerned, our whole interest is involved in the real state of ourselves, our business, and the subjects of it; our families, our country, and mankind. The collection of truths, which we receive concerning these and other subjects, is what is called *knowledge:* our guide to all that conduct, which may be useful to us, and our security against that, which may be noxious. The truth, that bread is wholesome food, enables us to eat it with safety. A falsehood, in this case, might lead us to swallow poison. A knowledge of the true state of our

farms, and of agriculture, enables us to cultivate our farms with profit. A knowledge of the real state of the markets, enables us to trade with safety and success. A knowledge of the real characters of men, enables us to choose those, who will be our real friends; and secures us from inviting to our friendship base and treacherous men. Misapprehension in these respects, would ruin both our business and ourselves.

In the Moral World, the truth concerning God, his pleasure, ourselves, the relations which we sustain to him and to each other, and the duties springing from these relations, enables us to obey him; to become blessings to each other; and to obtain the blessings of immortality. Falsehood, in these respects, would lead us infinitely astray. False apprehensions of God have led a great part of mankind to worship devils, men, beasts, trees, stocks, and stones; to mistake sin for virtue, and ruin for safety. No man ever dreamed, that his interests lay in the regions of fiction, or that his sober correspondence should be carried on with fairies and genii. But the man, who embraces falsehood, and is governed by it, places his interests, so far, in a world equally visionary; and corresponds not with real beings, but with creatures of fancy. As happiness can never come to us from the regions of fiction, or their imaginary inhabitants; so happiness never sprang, and never will spring, from false views of the real world, and its real inhabitants. Our only connexion with these objects is through the medium of truth, or the knowledge of their real state.

2. *Truth is, in itself, a rich source of Enjoyment.*

By this I intend, that it is an object immediately enjoyed; and that, when presented to the mind, it communicates pleasure of course.

Fiction may be, in this sense, and, I acknowledge, often is, a source of real enjoyment to the mind. God, to raise our views to a better world than that which has been ruined by our apostacy, and to awaken in us desires for a nobler happiness than any which this world supplies, has made us capable of forming many delightful objects in our imagination; many, which are beautiful; many, which are sublime; and many, which are wonderful. On these the mind rests with pleasure, during short periods; especially in youth; and, so long as they are regarded as objects of imagination merely, they are sources of pleasure, which may be really enjoyed, and to a considerable extent. But when any fiction is changed into a falsehood; when it ceases to be an object of the imagination, and becomes an object of belief; it is always, sooner or later, a source of suffering, and not of enjoyment. Even in the character of fiction, it gradually loses its power to please. As we advance in years, the love of Truth, considered as a source of pleasure merely, takes its place; and the mind seeks

for enjoyment in knowledge, and not in the exercises of imagination.

But Truth is always capable of yielding more delight to the mind, than fiction: or, in other words, intellectual enjoyment is always capable of being superior to that, which flows in by the fancy. The actual state of things, which God has made, is, in every respect, more beautiful, glorious, and desirable, than any which the mind can imagine. Every person, who understands the modes, in which the mind is actively employed in forming complex ideas, whether of the Intellect, or the Imagination, knows, that all such ideas are made out of those, which it receives from objects really existing. These it can compound, and compare; but can add to them nothing, but what it has already perceived. New beauty, new sublimity, new loveliness, it can form only by bringing together, in new unions, the perception of beauty, sublimity, and loveliness, which it has derived either from the actual state of things, or from Revelation. In the objects formed by the fancy, therefore, there can be nothing, in degree, more sublime, beautiful, or lovely, than that, which it has already received. In conformity with these observations, no object was ever described by the pen of man, so as to make the impression of sublimity equally with the object itself. No images in human writings were ever so sublime, as those of Inspiration. No character, formed by the imagination, was ever to be compared with that of Christ.

When I speak of the actual state of things, which God has made, as in every respect more beautiful, glorious, and desirable, than any, which the mind can imagine, I mean the whole state of things. The Universe is a single system. Every thing, belonging to it, is a necessary, and proper, part of the system: such a part, as Infinite Wisdom thought it best to make; and, therefore such, as was more desirable, than any thing else, in its place. The whole, taken together, is a perfect system: the result of the perfect views of the All-Perfect Mind. In such a sense is it perfect, that it is truly said, *Jehovah shall rejoice in his Works:* that is, because all, united, are such, as to accomplish, to the utmost, the good pleasure of his boundless Wisdom. The Truth concerning this system, or the knowledge of its real state, will for ever delight, as well as enlarge, the minds of virtuous and immortal beings.

In the present world, imperfect, prejudiced, and narrow, as our minds are, the exhibitions of Truth concerning this subject in the Scriptures, are not only superior to every thing, conceived by the human imagination, but more delightful to every virtuous being; more delightful beyond comparison, as well as superior beyond degree. The Character of God; the Mediation of the Redeemer; the Agency of the Divine Spirit; the dispensations of infinite mercy; the restoration of sinners to virtue and happiness; the con-

summation of all things; the blessings of immortality; the glory of Heaven; and the future union of sanctified minds in that delightful world; leave out of sight, and out of remembrance, all the creations of Poetry; all the splendid excursions of Imagination. *Into these things, Angels desire to look.* All those, whose minds are attuned to the disposition of Angels, love to follow them in this divine employment. Nay, God Himself regards this combination of wonderful objects as a glorious picture, an illustrious emanation, of his own Wisdom, which he beholds for ever with the smiles of infinite complacency.

3. *That great division of Truth, which is called Moral, or Evangelical Truth, is, in an important sense, the foundation of all Virtue.*

Sanctify them through thy Truth! thy Word is truth: said our Saviour in his intercessory prayer, John xvii. 17. *Of his own will begat He us, with the Word of Truth,* James i. 17. *The Truth,* said Christ to the Jews, *shall make you free.* From these declarations it is completely evident, that Evangelical Truth is the means of that mighty change in the human soul, by which, according to the strong language of the Scriptures, it is *turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.*

The Law of the Lord, says *David, is perfect, converting the soul.* But the Law of God is nothing but Truth, communicated in the perceptive form. All its influence on the soul is derived from this fact: and, were it not conformed to Truth, or were it, in other words, founded on falsehood, its moral influence would cease. Particularly, its influence to produce this conversion would be annihilated. Truth, then, is, in this point of view, of just as much importance to the happiness of mankind, and to the glory of God, as the salvation of all the millions, who have been, or will be, saved.

Falsehood, or error, has, in the mean time, never had the least influence towards the accomplishment of this glorious purpose. From the erroneous moral systems of men, no individual ever gained the least tendency towards real virtue. Truths, indeed, these systems have always involved: and the influence of these truths has so far been felt by mankind, as to prompt them to many commendable actions, and to prevent them from becoming as abandoned, as they would otherwise have been. The errors, which they contained, have, so far as they were believed, been the means of sin only. Of cordial and thorough reformation they have been absolutely barren. Truth and Falsehood have been blended in them with such confusion, as to be inseparable by the men who embraced them, without very different efforts from those, which they have been inclined, and in most cases able, to make. They have, therefore, been swallowed whole; and have produced just such effects, as a mind, enlightened by Revelation, could not fail to foresee. Error became the predominating rule of

action to all their votaries; and the Truth was chiefly lost, and forgotten.

But Moral Truth is not merely a rule, to teach us what Virtue is, and to guide us ultimately to this glorious attainment. To discern it with the understanding, and to welcome it to the heart, is virtue itself, as existing in the soul; and, when carried out into action, conformed also to its dictates, is all, which is included in the name of Virtue. In other words, *Virtue is nothing, but voluntary obedience to truth.*

Error, on the contrary, is the foundation of all iniquity. It leads the soul only away from duty, from virtue, from salvation, and from God. To the Divine Kingdom it is only hostile. To the Reformation, and happiness, of man, it is ruinous. It promotes no cause, but that of Satan: it forms no character, but that of Sin. All the just definitions of Sin are involved in this: that *it is nothing, but voluntary obedience to Error.*

In the mean time, all *the Motives to Virtue* are found in the general system of Truth: as all the motives to sin are found in systems of Error. Error contains nothing in it, to prompt us to obey God, to perform our duty, or to seek the salvation of ourselves and others. As a Motive, or combination of motives, Error contains nothing, but inducements to sin; and Truth nothing, but inducements to holiness. In all these important particulars, Truth is the basis of Virtue.

It cannot be thought strange, then, that *Love*, or Evangelical excellence, or in other words, real Virtue, should *rejoice in the Truth;* that Holiness should be styled by St. Paul, *holiness of Truth;* or that *those, who know not God*, and *obey not the Gospel*, or Truth, *of our Lord Jesus Christ*, should be classed together in the ruin of the Final Day.

By these views of the Importance of Truth, we are naturally led to the second subject of discourse, viz. *Veracity.*

The Importance of Veracity will sufficiently appear from the following Considerations.

1. *Almost all the Truth, which we know, we derive from Communication; and, of course, almost all the benefits of Truth, which we enjoy.*

A man, deprived of the communication of others, and left wholly to his own observation, would possess little more knowledge than a brute. It would be no easy matter to explain how he could subsist. If we suppose him to subsist through the ordinary period of human life; it is certain, that he would know nothing, beside his own feelings; and the little number of objects, which fell under his observation. Even of these he would rather form ideas, than possess knowledge. Of the relations between them he must remain almost absolutely ignorant. Nor would he easily acquire the skill, necessary to construct even the simplest propositions. Still less would he be able to reason, to illustrate, and to

prove.* In a word, his mind would rise, in very few things, above that of a dog, or an elephant; while, in almost all, he would fall far below them.

As he would know scarcely any thing concerning the present world; so, it is plain, he would know nothing of the world to come. Of God, of duty, of virtue, and of immortality, he would not form a single idea. Nor could he, without manifest impropriety, be styled a rational being. How could such a man enjoy the benefits of Truth at all?

The difference between this man as an intelligent being, and *Newton*, *Berkely*, or *Locke*, is made by *Communication*. The mass of ideas, accumulated by an individual, is communicated to others; and those of a preceding generation, to the generation which follows. By the labours of many individuals, and in the progress of successive generations, the knowledge, formed out of these ideas, has increased to that height, and extent, which exists at the present period. Every kind of business, art, and science, has been thus brought to the perfection in which *we* possess it; and all the benefits, which these things confer upon the present race of mankind, are derived solely from communication. For our knowledge of the future World, we are indebted wholly to communications from God. To the same source we are indebted for the chief knowledge, which we possess concerning the Moral system. All this knowledge is, indeed, contained in the Scriptures: yet a part of it may be, and has been, acquired without their assistance. To this knowledge we are indebted for the direction, comfort, and hope, which we enjoy in the character of moral beings; as we are to natural knowledge for the necessaries, and conveniences, of the present life. To communication, therefore, we owe almost every thing, whether present or future, which can be called desirable.

But the whole value, the whole usefulness, of communication, is derived solely from the truths which it conveys. False information can be of no use to us. As our own concern lies with the real state of things; and the good, or evil, which we are to enjoy, or suffer, is dependent on our knowledge of that state, and the conduct, dictated by this knowledge; it is evident, that the information which leads us to conceive erroneously of the things with which we are connected, will both hinder us from the acquisition of good, and expose us to the sufferance of evil. The measures, by which we design to acquire good, and to avoid evil, will, in both cases, fail of their effect; because, being founded on erroneous apprehensions, they will be unsuited to the existing state of things, and therefore to the accomplishment of the intended purpose. If we are falsely informed of business, we shall conduct it unhappily; if of the markets, we shall buy and sell with loss; if of our duty, we shall perform it amiss, or not at all; if of the means of salvation, we shall fail of it; if of the character and pleasure of God, we shall offend him in all our attempted services. Thus it is plain,

that all the benefits of Communication are dependent on its truth; and that almost every benefit of truth, experienced by rational beings, is derived from their mutual veracity.

2. *Veracity is the only foundation of Confidence.*

Confidence is the great bond of Society among Intelligent beings. Intelligent creatures are *supremely* dependent on their Creator, and, *to a vast extent*, on each other. From Him, ultimately, they derive all the good, which they enjoy: and without his perpetual protection, and blessing, they must not only be miserable, but must perish. A great part of these blessings He has been pleased to communicate to us through the instrumentality, and agency, of his rational creatures. To them, immediately, we are indebted for blessings, innumerable in their multitude, incalculable in their importance, and indispensable to our daily safety, peace, and comfort, and not unfrequently to the continuance of our lives. So numerous, and so continual, are these blessings, that they are generally regarded as things of course; and pass by us, unnoticed, and unseen.

Originally, all these blessings are unpossessed by us: all of them from time to time being future. It is necessary, therefore, that we should provide for the acquisition of them by such means as are in our power. As for almost all of them we must be indebted to the agency of others; we are compelled, unavoidably, to rely on their engagements to supply them. Here the field opens, in which confidence is to be exercised; and almost at our very entrance into life, it becomes boundless. We are obliged to trust to parents, and others, for protection, food, raiment, and innumerable other things, indispensable to our subsistence, as well as our comfort, from infancy to manhood. The offices, for which we rely, are necessary, and are rendered; the benefits are indispensable, and are communicated; every day, hour, and moment. Confidence is thus diffused every where, and at all times. We trust as naturally, and unceasingly, as we breathe; and with as little consciousness of the fact. In the same manner is the same confidence extended through life; exercised every moment; placed, in a greater or less degree, on every person, with whom we correspond; and employed about every object, with which we have any concern. If we could not confide; we should, in a sense, know nothing, acquire nothing, and do nothing, to any valuable purpose.

Equally indebted are we to confidence for almost the whole of our happiness. The emotion is delightful in itself, and indispensable to every other delightful emotion. It is equally pleasant to trust, and to be trusted. No supposable union of esteem and goodwill is more pleasing, more elevated, and more refined. Accordingly, it is thus regarded by those, who exercise it, and by those, towards whom it is exercised. Parents are never more delighted, than in the entire confidence of their children. Chil-

dren are never more happy, than when they entirely confide in their parents.

Equally necessary is confidence to the existence, and operations, of government. Indeed, Government, without it, would be a nullity. Even the despot himself must rely on a numerous train of agents for the accomplishment of his purposes. Without their co-operation, he could do nothing towards the control of his subjects, beyond what he could accomplish by his own physical strength. Accordingly, he is always compelled to buy the assistance of such agents with extensive gratuities of wealth and honour, as well as to force it by terror.

Virtuous Rulers, who govern a free people by laws, and by influence, stand only on the mutual confidence of themselves and their subjects. Withdraw this confidence; and the Government is annihilated at once. The Rulers become powerless, and the Society is lost in anarchy.

A state of absolute distrust is a state of absolute misery. Like the cold hand of death, Distrust would dissolve the whole frame and texture, of the social body; the joints and the ligaments, the energy and the life. A country could no longer contain its inhabitants; nor even the den its banditti. Such a state of things in this world has, hitherto, never existed in the absolute sense.

Without confidence, God himself would cease to be the Moral Governor of Intelligent creatures. As I have elsewhere considered this subject; it will be the less necessary to insist upon it here. Still, a few observations concerning it cannot be improper.

It is clear, even to a very limited and obtuse apprehension, that, without confidence in a ruler, voluntary obedience can never exist; that, without voluntary obedience, God can never be pleased with his Intelligent creatures; since no other can be honourable to Him; and that, without the same obedience, those creatures can never be amiable in his sight; since no other can render them virtuous. Distrust is an absolute separation of those beings, in whom it exists, from those, towards whom it is exercised. A being distrusted can never be loved, reverenced, nor voluntarily obeyed. Of such obedience, confidence is the commencement, the soul, and the substance. But, where there is no truth in the ruler, there can be no confidence in the subject. However great, however knowing, the Divine Ruler might be supposed, or perceived to be; his greatness and knowledge would, unless accompanied by veracity, only inspire suspense and terror; suspense and terror pervading the Intelligent Universe, distracting every heart, and filling every world with agitation and anguish. Omnipotence would, indeed, enable him to compel an external conformity to his Pleasure; but the obedience rendered would be the obedience of slaves, and not of children. It is a plain moral impossibility, that a Being without

veracity should be respected or loved. However great and splendid an earthly Ruler may be; however successful in his designs; however magnificent in his mode of living; however distinguished for his talents; and however liberal in his largesses; he would, if a liar, be still a base and contemptible being. Falsehood in an Infinite Being would render him infinitely contemptible. Even the benevolence of the Gospel, without Truth, (if it were possible to separate them) would be changed into a kind of amiable weakness; a silly, wavering good nature, and would cease to command respect.

A Ruler, without truth, could offer no motives to his subjects, which could induce them to obey. Should he enact laws, promise rewards, and threaten penalties; it would be very uncertain whether the law prescribe the conduct, which would be agreeable to him; whether the rewards would be given to such as faithfully obeyed; or whether the penalties would be inflicted on such as disobeyed. Whatever he promised; whatever he threatened; no reliance could be placed on his declarations; and they could, therefore, hold out no motives to obedience. But a moral government is a government operating by motives; and without motives cannot exist.

Thus it is completely evident, that the Kingdom of God, or his Government of the Intelligent Universe, rests upon Truth, as its foundation.

3. *Veracity is the source of inestimable Personal good.*

Veracity is the first constituent of an honourable, and even of a fair, reputation. A bad man, who is known always to speak truth, will always command a considerable share of respect; but a liar is despised of course. So contemptible is falsehood, that to charge any man with this vice is universally regarded as the last affront, which scorn and ill-nature are able to offer; as an injury, for which an atonement can scarcely be made.

Without Veracity, Virtue, as has been heretofore remarked, *can in no sense exist.* To the existence of virtue, then, in our own minds, Veracity is indispensable.

Equally indispensable is it to Self-approbation. Conscience, like God, always delights in truth; and always approves of speaking truth. This approbation it faithfully, and invariably, whispers to the soul. Few enjoyments can be compared with self-approbation. It is delightful; it is full of peace, comfort, and hope; it is independent of time and accident, of friends and enemies. *The world cannot give* it: the world cannot *take* it *away.*

Conscience, on the other hand, abhors a lie; and solemnly, and dreadfully, reproaches the Liar. Wherever falsehood is loved, and uttered, Conscience pierces the soul with stings of agony; and holds up to the culprit a dreadful mirror, by which all his deformity and guilt are forced upon his view. The terrible likeness he is compleled to own. At the sight of this awful image he trembles

falters; and reluctantly, but irresistibly, sinks beneath the proper level of his nature.

Veracity is the source, also, of all personal Dignity. There is no dignity without consistency of character. A merely fickle, changeable man, although intentionally sincere, is at the best, but a mere trifler; and can never be the subject of real respectability. Moral inconsistency is still more hostile to dignity. The subject of it is, to every eye, not only contemptible, but odious. To himself, particularly, he appears of necessity base and despicable; and is forced to feel, that by his own crimes he has sunk himself below the proper character and rank of man.

Veracity makes us like to God. This glorious Being styles himself *a God of Truth;* and declares it to be impossible, that he should lie. Truth is the moral immutability of *his* character, and the moral consistency of finite intelligences. Him, Truth surrounds with dignity infinite. Them, it exalts to a resemblance of Him, which is divine and eternal; an image of Supreme excellence and beauty.

Veracity is no less the source of Usefulness. Men never voluntarily employ those, in whom they do not place confidence. *As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the loiterer to him that sendeth him.* The fear of being deceived, the suspense and anxiety, which we necessarily feel, when our affairs are in the hands of unfaithful men, soon forbid a repetition of the same experiment. Equally unwilling are we, in all ordinary cases, to be employed by men of this character. Such men demand from us services, expect from us compliances, and propose to us terms, inconsistent both with comfort, and integrity; and, when our services are performed, they will usually, so far as safety will permit, and their own convenience may require, defraud us of our proper reward. I know of but one exception to these remarks. Bad men do, I acknowledge, employ bad men to promote a bad cause: but even they confide useful, honourable employment, only to persons of integrity. Equally necessary is this attribute to the production, and establishment, of that influence, which constitutes a great part of the usefulness of every useful man. A liar can neither convince others, nor persuade others. Others cannot engage with him in any serious, useful design. They cannot enter into his service, nor employ him in theirs, with safety, or hope. His falsehood is a blast upon his character, and upon his interests, alike. He, who is connected with him, lives in continual fear of being betrayed; and he only, who shuns him, is either happy or safe.

Finally; *Veracity is indispensable to our Acceptance with God.* The Psalmist, when he inquires, *Who shall ascend into the tabernacle of the highest?* solemnly answers, *He that speaketh truth in his heart; he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.* Such is the universal language of the Scriptures. *Lying lips*, saith the

wise man, *are an abomination unto the Lord. There shall in no wise enter into the city any thing that defileth; nor he that loveth, and maketh, a lie.* Every liar, therefore, knows, that he is in a state of condemnation; that, hitherto, he has no title to endless life, nor a single hope of final acceptance with God. Before these blessings can be begun, his ruling character must be renounced. He, who *requireth truth in the inward parts*, can turn no eye, but that of indignation and abhorrence, upon a soul, polluted with falsehood, and enstamped with the foul image of him, who *was a liar from the beginning, and the father of it.* In Heaven a liar would be a gazing-stock; a spot on the beautiful and glorious aspect of that happy world; a curse to himself; and a nuisance to its exalted inhabitants.

There is one world in the Universe, and, so far as we are informed, but one, in which Truth is unknown, and falsehood reigns, and ravages. Here *all liars have their part;* and all, who dwell here, are liars. Here, to deceive, and to be deceived, is the base employment, and the wretched lot. Truth, here, is never spoken, unless to deceive; and confidence is never exercised. Friendship, sociality, the union of hearts, and the interchange of affections, are never found in this dreary and dreadful region. In the midst of millions, every individual is alone. A gloomy and terrible solitude broods over the desolate vast; and the eye of suffering and sorrow, stretching its look of anguish above, around, beneath, finds no friend, in whom it may confide; no bosom, on which it may repose with comfort, peace, or hope.

How different is that delightful residence, where all who love, and speak, Truth, are by the boundless goodness of the Creator united in a divine and blissful assembly. Here, Truth, by every member of this vast and happy family, is loved, studied, embraced, and spoken, for ever. Confidence, here, enters the soul; and takes up, in this unsullied mansion, its eternal residence. Friendship, the twin sister of Confidence, dwells, and smiles, by her side; and sheds upon the purified mind her immortal enjoyments: while God with infinite complacency beholds this illustrious work of his own hands; and showers around it with eternal profusion the ever-growing blessings of his unchangeable love.

SERMON CXXVI.

NINTH COMMANDMENT.—THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF LYING.

EXODUS XX. 16.—*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

IN the preceding discourse I considered, at some length, *the Nature* and *Importance of Truth and Veracity*. These are the *basis* of the Precept in the text. I shall now go on to examine the immediate *subject* of the Text, viz. *Falsehood*, under the two following heads:

I. *Lying;*

II. *Slander.*

Under the former of these heads I shall include *Promise-breaking*, and *Perjury*.

In discoursing on this subject, I propose to consider,

The Nature;

The Causes;

The Mischiefs; and,

The Preventives; of Lying.

Concerning the first of these subjects, viz. The *Nature* of Lying, I observe generally, that a Lie is *a false declaration of facts, wilfully made, or made*, as is sometimes the case, *from indifference to truth.*

A False Promise is a crime, substantially of the same nature with *a Lie, in the proper sense.* A lie is *a false declaration of existing facts.* A false promise is *a false declaration of future facts.*

Perjury is *a false declaration either of present or future facts, wilfully made, accompanied by an oath. Perjury in evidence* is a false declaration, under oath, of existing facts. *Perjury under an oath of office or trust* is a false declaration of future facts. The future facts, here referred to, are universally such as are supposed to be under our own control; and are chiefly such as are involved in our own conduct. Such at least is the case, *when the oath, or promise, is lawfully made.*

Mankind are guilty of Lying, that is, substantially guilty, in the following ways.

1. *In voluntary declarations of facts, which are known to be false.*

For example; every narration, known to be false, is a lie. Equally such is every description, of a similar nature.

2. *In declaring that to be true, which we believe to be otherwise, although, in the end, it should be found, that the truth was really declared.*

To our minds that is true, or false, which after careful examination we believe to be so. Before we make our declarations, we are bound to examine as impartially, and as thoroughly, as we can. After such an examination, if we declare, agreeably to the best knowledge which we are able thus to obtain, and with no more confidence than such an examination warrants, our veracity is, I apprehend, unimpeachable. We may indeed mistake; but are in no sense guilty of lying. But if we declare that which is contrary to our belief, although the declaration should be exactly true, we are still intentionally, and therefore in the criminal sense, liars.

3. *In rashly asserting what is not true, when the assertion springs from a sinful Neglect of Examining.*

Inconsiderate and rash men assert roundly, although they do not know that, which they assert, to be true; and have no sufficient reasons for believing it to be true. This conduct is derived only from the want of a just sense of the importance of Truth, and the value of Veracity. Such a sense will prompt every man, who possesses it, to examine before he asserts; to assert with watchfulness and caution; and, where he does not feel himself warranted to make unqualified declarations, to express his belief, his opinion, or his apprehension.

No excuse can be given for this indifference to truth. To mankind its importance is infinite. The sacrifice of it is, in all instances, an injury which can neither be repaired, nor recalled. Every man is bound to regard it in this manner, to enable himself to speak truth only, whenever he speaks at all. He therefore, who by a voluntary negligence is led rashly to make false assertions, is without excuse.

4. *In professing to declare the whole truth, and yet concealing a part of it, with an intention to deceive.*

A wilful deception is here intended, and accomplished: the very thing, which constitutes the essence of Lying. The means, indeed, differ; but the spirit, the guilt, and the purpose, are the same.

There is, I acknowledge, a prudent and justifiable concealment, as well as a guilty one. What others have not a right to know, we are not bound to declare. Nor are we, of course, bound to disclose the whole of a subject in many cases, where we may be willing to communicate a part. But in every case, our disclosures, and our concealments, must be exactly accordant with our professions. The writer, who professes to record the whole of a story, is inexcusable, if he narrate only a part; although every thing which he actually declares, may be true. The witness, who, under the oath of evidence, withholds any thing which he knows, pertaining to the subject in debate, is perjured.

5. *In Colouring the subject of our declarations so as to give it a different aspect from the true one.*

This is an extensive field of falsehood; too extensive, indeed, to be thoroughly explored at the present time.

A common mode of transgressing, in the way here generally described, is *to represent* the conduct of others *truly*, perhaps, *as to the principal facts*, and to surround it with such circumstances, annex to it such appendages, and attribute it to such motives, as, taken together, will give it an appearance either partially, or wholly, false; and as is common in instances of this nature, very injurious to them.

Another mode of transgressing in this way is to exhibit the opinions, or doctrines of others, not in language which they would acknowledge, but in language of our own choice; selected for the purpose of rendering such opinions or doctrines, absurd and deformed, and of rendering those, who hold them, odious to others. This is, almost of course, accompanied with, what is exactly of the same nature, charging upon them consequences, which *we* make, and *they* disclaim.

The doctrines of the Reformation have, in a very remarkable manner, been followed, and persecuted, with this species of falsehood. It is at least extraordinary, if not singular, that these doctrines are never, or very rarely if ever, represented by those who oppose them, in such terms, as are used by those who profess them; but in terms, which materially vary the nature of the doctrines. In this manner it is plainly intended to make them objects of alarm, and abhorrence, to others; and to engage by this obliquity of representation the passions of mankind in a course of hostility against their defenders. Every class of men have undoubtedly a right to express their own opinions in their own terms; and to admit, or reject, such consequences of their opinions, as they think proper. The doctrines may indeed be fairly impeached, and by argument shown to be absurd, if it can be done; and any consequences may, so far as it can be shown by reason, be proved to follow from them. But to vary the terms, in which the doctrine is exhibited, from those, in which it is declared by its defenders, and to charge them with holding it in such a manner, as we are pleased to express it: to draw consequences from it at our own pleasure, and exhibit them as the opinions of those, with whom we contend, although disclaimed by them; is plainly disingenuous, false, and criminal.

Another example of the same nature is presented to us by *Constructive Narration.*

By this I intend *that Narration, in which the writer, or speaker, construes events, together with the actions, motives, and characters, of those, concerned in them, in such a manner, as he pleases;* that is, *in a manner, accordant with his own views, interests, passions and prejudices; and interweaves his constructions in the recital, without giving any notice of this fact, so as to make them an inseparable part of the Narrative.* The reader, here, is unable to tell what is

fact, and what is construction; and of course, unless preserved from it by superior discernment, is betrayed into a belief of all the errors, created by the prejudices of the writer. A great part of modern history is, if I mistake not, written in this unfortunate manner; and, in this respect, differs essentially, and unhappily, from the ancient manner of Narration. Falsehood is here taught in a mode, which seems often to defy detection, and which, at least in my view, is inexcusable.

The ridicule of what is true, just, good, honourable, or sacred, is an evil of the same nature. The things, represented by him who uses the ridicule, are commonly real; and, were they represented in their own native and true colours, would not be, and could not be, made ridiculous. But they are falsely coloured; are violently connected with appendages, with which they have naturally no connexion; are distorted, maimed, and forced into every unnatural and monstrous attitude. The ridiculousness and absurdity, which cannot be found in the things themselves, are fastened upon them. When presented to the eye, once in this association, created by the hand of ill-natured ingenuity, it will be difficult for the mind to disjoin them afterwards. In this manner, things of the most important, solemn and venerable nature, having been once seen in the light of absurdity through an artificial association, are often regarded as absurd, and contemptible, through life. No excuse can be pleaded for this unworthy and disingenuous conduct.

Of the same nature are, also, what are called *Marvellous stories*. Persons of a lively imagination are prone greatly to admire almost every thing, which they see or hear, and to find an excessive pleasure in whatever is really wonderful. With this disposition they are led to represent almost all things, which they relate, as extraordinary and surprising. Were we to give full credit to what they say; we should be ready to believe, that their lives had passed only through scenes of a marvellous kind, and that they had hardly ever met with ordinary beings, or ordinary events. The language of these persons is, to a great extent, made up of superlatives only; and their images are drawn only in the strongest and most glowing colours.

Such persons have, I acknowledge, as little intention to deceive in many, perhaps in most, instances, as other men. Still, through an eagerness to enhance every thing, which they relate, the representations, which they give, are continually untrue; and the apprehensions, which they excite, are regularly erroneous. There may be, there often is, no intentional deception in their thoughts. Still, they continually deceive; and that of choice; that they may enjoy the pleasure, found in the indulgence of an eager imagination.

6. *In Flattery and Censure.*

Flattery is the ascription of good qualities to others, which they do not possess, or in greater degrees than they possess them. Sometimes, this ascription is the result of the mere warmth of affection; and is then, though not wholly undeserving of censure, undoubtedly less criminal than in other cases. No warmth of affection, and no worth in the object of it, will however justify us in speaking that, which is not true. Usually, it is dictated by sinister views, and intended to be the means of accomplishing unworthy purposes. In this case, the author of it is a palpable, though a very pleasing liar. The purpose, which he has in view, is a sinful one; and the means, which he adopts to compass it, are always sinful and contemptible. Accordingly, mankind have proverbially declared the flatterer to be an odious and despicable wretch.

Censure is, often, just and vindicable; often a duty; and not unfrequently a proof of superior worth. This, however, invariably supposes, that the censure is deserved; that it is demanded by the nature of the case; and that it is administered, solely to promote the good of the censured, and not to gratify the pride, or ill nature of the censurer. But as the word is used above, it is intended to denote a false denial of good qualities, or a false ascription of bad ones, adopted, to gratify our own unworthy feelings, and to wound those of another. Falsehood of this nature is too well understood, and too generally detested, to need any comment.

7. *In alleging to support a doctrine, or a cause,* arguments, *which in our own view are unsound; or alleging those, which have some degree of soundness and weight, as having more weight than we believe; or alleging them with more confidence, than we really experience in our minds.*

Veracity, as it respects arguments, demands, that we allege such, as in our view are really sound; that we attribute to them exactly the weight, which we believe them to possess; and that we advance them with expressions of no more confidence in them than we actually feel. No reason can be alleged, why we may wilfully deceive in our Arguments, any more than in our Declarations; or why Sophistry is less guilty, than what is appropriately called Lying. The conduct in both cases is the same; viz. a wilful deception. The design is the same. The mischiefs, also, are as great in the former case, and often greater, than in the latter. Nor can any reason be alleged, to prove the guilt less.

Of the same nature is *the concealment of such arguments, as we possess,* when the support of truth and justice demands them, or the overthrow of falsehood and injustice.

8. *In Promise-breaking.*

A promise is *an engagement to do, or abstain from, something, either absolutely, or conditionally.* When this engagement is made to God, it is termed *a Vow;* when to our fellow-men, *a*

Promise. The laws of morality, which regulate both, are in substance the same. When a Promise is made absolutely, or when the conditions, on which it is made, are performed, we are bound to fulfil it, exactly, according to its tenour. Nor can we be released from this obligation, unless the performance is either impossible, or unlawful; or unless by the consent of him to whom the promise is made. In every other case, the violation of the promise is a lie; at least as criminal, base, and detestable, as any other.

Our obligations to Veracity are greatly enhanced by an Oath: one of the most solemn and affecting transactions, in which man is ever concerned. In this transaction, God, our Creator, Judge, and Rewarder; God, who *requireth truth in the inward parts;* God, who *seeth not as man seeth*, but who *looketh on the heart;* is invoked as an awful Witness of the manner, in which we speak. If we speak truth; we declare our hope of His Mercy: if we speak falsely, we imprecate His Vengeance. What rational being, hitherto ignorant of the perjuries, which deform this guilty world, could believe, that any man, thus situated, would fail to speak truth with the deepest solicitude, and the most perfect exactness! Yet perjury is in the list of human crimes; and forms no inconsiderable part of that dreadful Catalogue.

The guilt of every species of lying, when perpetrated under the solemnities of an oath, is enhanced by these considerations. The sin in almost all cases is more deliberately committed. The person to whom an oath is administered, has every opportunity, which he can wish, for summoning up to the view of his mind every motive to the performance of his duty, and every inducement to abstain from falsehood. These inducements, also, are the strongest conceivable. God in a peculiar manner is present to his thoughts: the *God of Truth*, who has declared, that *all liars shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone.* His soul is put at hazard on his utterance of truth or falsehood. If he speaks falsehood, he voluntarily consigns himself to perdition. If he is guilty of perjury, he is ruined, also, for this world. The stain is too deep, ever to be wiped away. At the same time he does what is in his power to cut up confidence by the roots. *An oath for confirmation*, says *St. Paul, is to men the end of all controversy.* Heb. vi. 16. If the confidence, reposed in an oath, could be reposed no more; human disputes must either be unsettled, or terminated by the strength of the arm: and to this end he, who perjures himself, does all in his power to conduct them.

At the same time, it is ever to be remembered, that God Himself has been pleased, on various occasions, *to confirm his own word by an oath.* In this manner he has testified to us, that, in his view, an oath adds a peculiar sanction to that, which has been said even by Himself. Universally, he, who utters a falsehood

under this solemn obligation to speak truth, sins against all the motives, which can be conceived to influence him to the performance of his duty.

The Causes of Lying, the second thing proposed in this scheme of this Discourse, *are, generally, all the Temptations, which men feel to this unhappy practice.* Men utter falsehood, extensively, for the acquisition of wealth, honour, power, and pleasure; to advance the purposes of party; to ensure success in a controversy; to gain a favourite point; to mortify a rival, or an enemy; and for innumerable other purposes. In the discourse, which I delivered on the subject of *Frauds, practised on our fellow-men*, numerous specimens of this nature were either alluded to, or expressly mentioned. Similar specimens, perhaps equally numerous, are attendant upon the eager pursuit of all those worldly gratifications, which men ardently covet. *I know of no case, in which Lying more abounds*, than *that of vehement party contention.* Universally, men, embarked in unworthy designs, as I shall have occasion to mention more particularly hereafter, find falsehood exceedingly convenient, if not indispensable to their success. Depraved as mankind are, a bad cause cannot be carried on with success, without the aid either of falsehood, or the sword.

All these are *immediate* Causes of Lying. Those, to which I have originally referred, are *more remote.* They are such, as subvert the original tendency to speak Truth, which we regularly find in the earliest ages of life. The influence of these causes is peculiarly exerted upon the minds of such as are young; and they are led into habits of Lying, before they are capable of understanding either their guilt, or their danger. These causes are principally the following.

1. *Children are often taught to lie by Example.*

Few persons of adult years are, perhaps, sufficiently sensible how soon children begin to understand the nature of those things, which they see, and hear; especially the nature of human conduct. From this, as well as from other causes, it frequently happens, that many things are done, and said, before very young children, which would not be said, or done, if it were well understood, that the children would clearly comprehend, and regularly copy, them. By this misapprehension the members of many a family, and unhappily the parents also, are often induced to make their children witnesses of palpable falsehoods, when, bad as themselves are, they would not corrupt their children in this manner, were they aware, that their conduct would thus become the means of corruption. Often, these falsehoods are uttered in earnest: often, they are uttered in jest. In both cases their influence is alike pernicious.

The power of all example is great; especially of evil example; but, perhaps, in no case greater than in that of falsehood. Here, the falsehood is brought home to the child with an influence whol-

ly peculiar. It is uttered by those, whom he loves; by those whom he venerates; by those of whom he has never formed a disadvantageous suspicion. It is calmly and coolly told to others in his presence, without a doubt, expressed, of its rectitude; and is, at times, accompanied by a direct explanation of the advantages, which are hoped from it. At other times, it is uttered in the zeal of dispute, and the warmth of passion. At other times, a multitude of falsehoods are combined together in a marvellous story, and, in many families, such stories form no small part of the domestic conversation. At other times still, and instances innumerable, the private history of persons, and families in the neighbourhood, furnishes an almost endless tissue of interwoven truth and falsehood; and constitutes the chief entertainment of the house. Families, composed of sprightly members, make, also, innumerable assertions in jest, which are untrue; which the child, who hears them, perceives to be untrue; and for the falsehood of which he does not perceive the sport to yield any justification.

All these, even very young children will usually discern to be falsehoods. No person can wonder, that they should be induced to adopt this conduct, when he remembers, that it is set before them, continually, in so many modes, by those who are so much the objects of affection and reverence. That children derive this turpitude in very many instances, originally, and chiefly, from such an example, they themselves abundantly prove. The reason, which they almost always give, and first give, for the commission of this crime, is, that others have done the same thing.

In multiplied instances, falsehoods *are directly told to children*, particularly very young children, to persuade them to acquiesce cheerfully, in things which are disagreeable. Children, like older persons, have many wishes, the gratification of which is, in their view, important to their happiness; but which others know to be fraught with danger and mischief. To persuade them quietly to give up such gratifications, Parents, and others, frequently adopt the easy and convenient method of deceiving them. Thus parents, who wish to go abroad, and to persuade their young children to remain at home, often declare, that they are going out, to return immediately: while the children clearly discern, that the declaration is false. When parents, also, or others, are abroad, whose absence is very painful to children; servants, and others to quiet them, declare, often, that the parents are returning; are in sight; or will return within a very short time. To persuade them to take medicines, the children are assured, that they are sweet and pleasant; when, in truth, they are bitter and loathsome. To conceal from them designs also, and facts, which it is undesirable that they should know, many artful and insidious declarations are made to them; which, together with all those mentioned above, the children, in spite of the address, employed to prevent it, discern to be false.

Thus, to quiet them for a moment, they are often taught to become liars through life.

In a similar manner, children are deceived, and corrupted, *by false promises*. They are sick; are reluctant to take medicines, are peevish, and fretful; are wished by their parents to make little efforts to display their talents, and accomplishments, for the entertainment of visiters, and the gratification also of parental pride. To overcome their reluctance to these efforts, sooth their sufferings, and to quiet their fretfulness, they are promised money; new clothes; the possession of toys, and privileges; and, particularly, the privilege of going abroad. But the performance of such promises will usually occasion either trouble or expense. Very often, therefore, they are not performed. In this work of falsehood, parents, brethren, sisters, friends, and servants, frequently all unite; and the unfortunate children, who perfectly comprehend the deceit, find sometimes the whole, and sometimes a part, of the family thus combined for their destruction.

Equally unhappy are they in *the examples which they find abroad*. Children, thus corrupted, carry the miserable contagion to school. All their companions, who have been educated with happier care, and under better examples, are here exposed to the disease; and in many instances become infected and leprous through life.

At the same time, *Children are often permitted to frequent places, to which vile and unprincipled persons resort;* and there become witnesses of all their abominable sentiments, and conduct. Here, Lies are not only told, but are made the subjects of jest and diversion. Successful falsehoods, and impositions, are not only repeated, but repeated with explanations, merriment, and triumph; and exhibited as proofs of superior address, and honourable ingenuity. What child can fail of corruption in such haunts of sin, and amid such examples of villany?

2. *Children are taught to lie by Influence.*

In very early life, children discover a strong tendency to talk abundantly, to repeat marvellous stories; to rehearse private history; and to recount the little occurrences of the neighbourhood. *In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin.* Every tendency to loquacity ought, therefore, to be vigorously repressed. The disposition to recite marvellous stories, to give characters, and to recount private history, and the occurrences of the neighbourhood, increases by every indulgence; and soon becomes both habitual and enormous.

Instead of checking these propensities, however, no small number of parents, unaware of the danger, and forgetful of their duty, directly listen, and inquire; and in many instances repeat what has been said in this manner by their children. In this conduct, the children perceive that they derive consequence, in the parental eye, from the fact, that they utter things of this nature; and are efficaciously taught, that what they have said, instead of being

criminal, odious, and disgraceful, is right, and pleasing. They are naturally, and powerfully, led, therefore, to increase, instead of slackening, their efforts; and to multiply their tales of these unfortunate kinds. From repeating, they go on to exaggerating; from rehearsing, to inventing; and from inventing such parts, as the memory does not supply, to inventing the whole. In this manner, they become, after no great length of time, absolute liars.

In multitudes of instances, also, children, to gain favourite objects, and interesting compliances, from their companions, are induced *to make promises*, of various kinds. These, afterwards, they are often disinclined to fulfil. The parent, whose duty it is to compel the performance, finding the child reluctant, because it involves some sacrifice of his playthings, his property, or his convenience, neglects this duty, and suffers the promise to go unfulfilled. In this manner, he gives his own sanction to a direct breach of faith, infinitely more mischievous to the child, than the loss of all the gratifications which he ever possessed. Nay, in some instances, the child is even encouraged, and, in some, directly commanded, not to fulfil his promise; because, perhaps, the fulfilment will be very painful to the child, or in some degree inconvenient to the parent. In all such cases as I have mentioned, nothing can be expected, but that the child should grow up without truth, and, of course, without any moral principle.

3. *Children are often driven to falsehood by Passion.*

There are parents, whose whole life is an almost continual scene of passion. There are others, who *often* break out into paroxysms of rage. Among these, the number is not small of those, who exercise this furious spirit towards their children; not unfrequently because their faults, whether real or supposed, disturb their own quiet, and make, or seem to make, it necessary for them to undertake, what they equally hate and dread, the task of parental discipline. The unhappy children are, in such cases, commonly assailed with the looks, and language, of a Fury, instead of those of a Christian parent. Terrified at this storm of wrath and rage, the children are, in a sense, compelled, under the influence of the severest threatenings, to lie, in order to conceal their faults, and escape the dreaded infliction. Passion, manifested towards children, whatever may have been their transgressions, is madness; shameful to the parent, and ruinous to the child. The parent, who exercises it, can expect nothing, but that his child should become a liar.

4. *Children are often forced to lie by Punishment.*

Parents, in many instances, feel satisfied, that they have done their duty, when they have corrected their children for this crime. Accordingly, as often as the children repeat the crime, they repeat the punishment. Hardly any mistake, with respect to the government of children, can be more unhappy than this. So far as my

own experience may be relied on, the same punishment can never be safely repeated, in any great number of instances, for the same fault. Usually, when administered once, if administered wisely, it will produce its whole efficacy on the child. All the supernumerary inflictions appear, ordinarily, to terminate in hardening the child; and, so far as my observation extends, in no case more effectually, than in that of lying. Perhaps, the rod is oftener used for the purpose of extirpating this fault than any other; and in no case, I suspect, with smaller success. The propriety and usefulness of correction, at early periods of childhood, are sanctioned by abundant experience, and by God Himself. But reiterated correction, I mean often reiterated, has, I believe, rarely cured a child of falsehood: while it has confirmed multitudes in this sin beyond every rational hope of reformation.

The consciousness of having been often corrected, produces, of course, in the mind of every child, who is the subject of this discipline, an habitual sense of degradation. A sense of degradation is more nearly allied, than mankind are usually aware, to hardness of heart. When punishment fails of producing repentance, it is commonly followed by indifference to the crime; often, by a determination to repeat it; and usually, by feelings of revenge towards the author of the infliction. A child has told a lie. The parent has been provoked by it. The child has been corrected; but has not become a penitent. On the contrary, he feels, that he has been injured; and, instead of regarding the lie as a crime, considers it only as an unfortunate cause of his own suffering. The turpitude of the act is therefore forgotten, and lost, in the sense of suffering. To retribute the abuse will naturally seem, in this case, a gratification, of no contemptible importance. A new crime is therefore committed, as soon as his own safety will permit. He is accused of it; and a new lie is told, to shield him from another correction. In this manner, he will soon begin to believe, that both his lies, and his other crimes, are merely a balance for a given measure of punishment; and will calculate how many blows it will be prudent to hazard for the pleasure of committing a fault, and the convenience of telling a lie. The parent, who governs his child in this manner, takes, in my opinion, well-directed measures to make him a villain.

SERMON CXXVII.

NINTH COMMANDMENT.—MISCHIEFS AND PREVENTIVES OF LYING.

EXODUS XX. 16.—*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

IN the preceding discourse I proposed to consider
The Nature;
The Causes;
The Mischiefs; and
The Preventives; of Lying.
The two first of these subjects I discussed at that time. I shall now proceed to discuss the two last. The

1. *Mischief of Lying is the great and general one; that it is a Sin against God.*

There have not been wanting persons in every age, who have holden the doctrine, *that Lying is in some cases lawful.* Among these, have been many professed Moralists, and at least some Divines. Particularly, the very respectable Writer, whose opinions I have several times questioned, Archdeacon *Paley* has taught this doctrine in form in his system of Moral Philosophy. At the head of these men we find the celebrated name of *Origen.* This Father, with an indistinctness of discernment, which characterizes not a small number of early writers in the Christian Church, as well as most others at the same period, appears to have believed, that a falsehood might be lawfully told, in order to promote the cause of Christianity. This scheme, universally extended, is no other than the fundamental and detestable maxim of Illuminism; *that the End sanctions the Means;* a maxim, on which *St. Paul* has pronounced a terrible sentence of condemnation; while common sense and common honesty subjoin their united *Amen.*

Dr. *Paley*, who strongly reprobates the doctrine of *Origen*, has, in my opinion, fallen into an error, as really, though not so extensively, mischievous. He declares *those falsehoods, where the person, to whom you speak, has no right to know the truth;* or, more properly, *where little or no Inconveniency results from the want of confidence; in such cases, not to be lies;* that is, *not to be criminal falsehoods.* The instances, by which he illustrates the doctrine, are those of *madmen* and *robbers:* persons who, in the cases supposed, have no right to know the truth; and to deceive whom, he remarks, in these cases, will either very little, or not at all, injure the confidence of mankind.

This is one, among various other unhappy specimens of the unhappy influence of the Rule, prescribed by Dr. *Paley*, for di-

recting the moral conduct of men; viz. *that the rectitude of our moral actions is to be measured by their Expediency, or Utility.* That Utility is the *Foundation* of Virtue has, it is believed, been sufficiently shown in a former discourse. That it cannot be the *Criterion* of virtue has also, if I mistake not, been proved to be equally certain. Indeed, nothing is more evident, than that the moral actions of beings, who cannot possibly know what their Consequences will be, cannot be safely directed by those consequences. In the present case, however, Dr. *Paley's* own doctrine will refute his position. His declaration is, that "*falsehoods are not lies, where the person, to whom you speak, has no right to know the truth; or more properly, where little or no Inconveniency results from the want of confidence in such cases: as where you tell a falsehood to a madman, for his own advantage; to a robber, to conceal your property; to an assassin, to defeat, or to divert, him from his purpose.*" "*In each of these cases,*" the Author says, "*the particular good consequence will overbalance the general evil consequence;*" and thence he concludes the falsehood to be lawful.

Two cases are here stated, in which a wilful falsehood is pronounced to be lawful. *One is that, in which the person in question, has no right to know the truth. The other, when little or no inconvenience will result from the falsehood.*

On the first of these I observe, that the person, who is to utter the falsehood, or the truth, in the case supposed, is always to determine whether the person, to whom he speaks, has a right to know the truth, or not. This determination, also, is ever to be made under the influence of such passions, and biasses, as may then happen to operate. It is impossible, that the decision should fail, at least in most cases, of being a prejudiced, and therefore an unsound one. The person, who is entangled with a madman, or assailed by a robber, or an assassin, must, at the time, be a very imperfect moralist; and in a very improper situation to decide justly concerning a question of this nicety and importance. What is true in this case, is equally true of an infinity of others. Passion and prejudice would operate boundlessly on this subject, in the ordinary course of human affairs; and, wherever they operated, would control. On this very principle it has been decided by the Romish Church, that it is lawful to lie to Huguenots; because Huguenots are such enemies to God, as to have no right to know the truth: a doctrine, which has probably done more towards corrupting that Church, than any, perhaps than all, the enormous errors, by which it has been disgraced. The consequence, as may be easily seen in the history of this very fact, would soon be, that few or none of those, with whom we had intercourse after this doctrine had become general, would, in our view, have a right to know the truth.

That there are persons, who, in certain cases, have not a right to know the truth from *us*, I readily grant. But it will be difficult to show, that we have a right to utter falsehood to *them*, any more than to *others*. We may lawfully be silent in many cases; we may lawfully conceal the truth; but we can, in no case, be justified in uttering a wilful falsehood.

With regard to the other rule of Dr. *Paley*, *that voluntary falsehoods cease to be lies, when very little inconvenience will result from the want of confidence which follows them;* I observe, that it is even more unhappy than the other. The degree of *inconvenience* which in this case will result to others, will always be estimated by comparing it with the *convenience*, which the falsehood will promise to ourselves. The convenience, which will overcome the natural repugnance of conscience to wilful falsehood, must, *for the time*, be felt to be considerable. In a comparison with a considerable convenience of our own; an inconvenience, experienced either wholly, or at least chiefly, by others, will naturally be regarded as inconsiderable. In almost all instances, therefore, to use the words of Dr. *Paley*, "little or no inconvenience will result from the falsehood," in the view of him who is to utter it, and who makes this comparison. Of course, in almost all instances, the falsehood will be uttered.

But when a man has once accustomed himself to utter falsehood so long, as to render the practice familiar, all that apprehensiveness of guilt, that ready susceptibility of alarm at the appearance of criminality, which constitutes the chief safety of Man in the moment of temptation, will be extinguished. The mind will be no longer agitated at the thought of sin, nor awake to the sense of danger. In this situation, the convenience of uttering falsehood to ourselves will always be great; and the inconvenience, which will result to others, will be always small. He who has uttered the first falsehood under the influence of ten degrees of temptation, will as readily utter the second, under the influence of eight; the third, of six; the fourth, of four; the fifth, of two; and the sixth without any temptation at all. The obliquity of his judgment, will now prevent him from discerning, that others suffer any inconvenience from his conduct. In this manner, any man living, may easily become, in a short time, a confirmed liar.

Thus the adoption of either of these rules, and still more of both of them, will prove a complete destruction of that confidence without which such society cannot exist. I need not say, that this evil would more than counterbalance all the good, which a licentious imagination has ever supposed, or can suppose, to be capable of resulting from all possible falsehoods, in a degree, which no numbers can estimate, and no finite mind conceive. Utility itself, therefore, absolutely forbids the adoption of these rules.

But this view of the subject is imperfect, and so far erroneous. The old distinction of crimes into what are styled by jurists *mala*

in se, and *mala prohibita*, is entirely just, as well as incalculably important. The *mala in se*, are *those, which are absolutely forbidden by God;* because they are universally noxious to the Intelligent creation, and universally dishonourable to the Creator. He, who sees from the beginning to the end, and discerns all the possible consequences of all moral conduct, has thus pronounced them to be universally malignant in their influence on Intelligent beings. *Mala Prohibita*, are *such evils, as are forbidden in certain circumstances, which render them evils; or for the accomplishment of certain useful purposes, which could not otherwise be so well accomplished.* These, in the ordinary state of things, would be matters of indifference; and, unless prohibited, would either not be, or not be known to be, evils. Such, for example, was the eating of unclean meats; the assumption of the priest's office by those, who were not descendants of *Aaron;* and many others, found in the *Jewish* Law.

Lying is a pre-eminent evil, *of the former class.* Accordingly, it is *absolutely forbidden by God.* The proof, that it is such an evil, furnished in the discourse on the Nature and Importance of Truth and Veracity, (the first delivered on the Text) is, if I mistake not, complete. Truth, and the Utterance of it, were there shown to be the foundation of all society, and the basis of all virtue and happiness. If this be admitted; Lying is plainly a radical evil; threatening the very existence of the Divine Glory, and the whole interest of the Intelligent Universe. In the Scriptures, it is unconditionally forbidden, deeply censured, and terribly threatened. *Whosoever loveth, and maketh a lie*, God has said, *shall in no wise enter into the* heavenly *City; but shall have his part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone.* Lying, then, is, in this respect, infinitely mischievous; as peculiarly provoking the anger of God, and being eminently the means of eternal wo. It is to be remembered, that the Scriptures no where relax on this subject; furnish no indulgence to the practice; contain not a single hint that Lying can never be lawful; and are absolutely silent concerning that want of right to know the truth, and that smallness of inconvenience resulting from falsehood, which will make a falsehood, wilfully uttered, cease to be a lie.

The case is often put, *that a lie may save one's own life, or the lives of others.* The objection, involved in this case, is answered in many forms by the Scriptures. *St. Paul* declares, that *the condemnation of those, who only reported*, that he and his companions taught the doctrine of *doing evil, that good might come, was just.* What would he have said of those, who themselves taught this doctrine. But Lying, to save life, is doing evil, that good may come. Let no man think this a hard case. Christ has repeatedly told us, that *he, who will save his life* by violating his duty, *shall lose it; and* that *he, who shall lose his life for his sake*, that is, by

doing his duty, *shall find it* in the heavens. With this declaration in view, no man, it is presumed, will think himself required to utter a lie for the sake of saving his life. Had the Apostles, and the Martyrs, thought proper to lie, they might not only have saved their lives, but avoided, also, all the horrors, and sufferings, of malignant persecution.

It has been alleged, and supposed to afford some degree of countenance to this sin, that it was committed by *Abraham*, *Isaac*, *Jacob*, and some other saints of ancient times. Without attempting to determine how far the faults of these good men may have been diminished by their imperfectly critical acquaintance with the proper nature of moral conduct, I shall answer the allegation by this question only. Will your sin be lessened, or fail of being punished, because the same sin was committed by a patriarch?

2. *Lying produces incomprehensible mischief to the Public concerns of Nations.*

All good government, as I have heretofore observed, is founded in confidence; and all oppressive government, in force, or fraud. Governments, constitutionally free, resort invariably to fraud, whenever they wish to oppress. Even Despotism itself is compelled, universally, to the same resort; and is afraid, and unwilling, to rely on mere physical strength for the accomplishment of its tyrannical designs. It has recourse, therefore, to an uninterrupted series of art, and management, to ensure the submission of its subjects. Of this management, deceit is not merely the chief, but in a sense the only, means. All tyrants lie; and lie unceasingly. All their subordinate agents are abandoned liars. Were the tyrant himself, and the instruments of his tyranny, to lay aside their deception, the tyranny would tumble to the ground.

If the Rulers of a nation, possessing liberty, were invariably to utter truth; it would be impossible that the Government should not be well administered. Should such rulers form evil designs against public or private happiness; an honest disclosure of their purposes would defeat them of course. This every ruler, who forms such designs, knows perfectly well; and, therefore, he artfully misrepresents, or studiously conceals, them. But no design of any extent can be executed without a disclosure to all those, who are necessarily employed in the execution. Were *these* men of integrity, they would disclose it, of course, to the public. Such men, therefore, are never voluntarily employed by rulers to accomplish evil designs. Men of falsehood are invariably sought for such purposes, and invariably employed in accomplishing them.

The person, who has not read political history with an eye to this subject, is an incompetent judge of the immense extent to which falsehood is employed for the purposes of oppression, and of the

innumerable forms, in which it has been played off upon the unhappy race of men for their destruction. Art and trick, pretence and sophistry, false declarations and false promises, have ever been a more formidable host of enemies to public liberty safety, and happiness, than the sword and the musket, the dungeon and the gibbet. Falsehood has ever been the mine, by which the enemies of freedom have blown up her citadel, and buried her votaries in the ruins. Falsehood ruined the freedom of *Greece* and *Rome;* and overturned all the Republics of Modern *Europe*. Without this terrible engine, the *Romish* Hierarchy would never have raised its head to Heaven; nor trodden down in the dust the suffering nations of men. Without this tremendous assistant, the *French* Republic would never have sprung into existence; nor offered up half Europe as an holocaust to the powers of darkness. Banish falsehood from the world; and you will redeem it from three-fourths of its sins, and from almost all its sufferings.

Nations have, in most cases, eagerly watched against the intrusions of power, and the establishment of internal force. So far they have acted wisely. But, without the aid of falsehood, no force, beside that of a foreign conqueror, ever destroyed public liberty. Against this enemy they ought to watch with the eyes of Argus; a creeping, serpentine enemy; advancing silently, and imperceptibly; equally unseen, and unsuspected. If they were willing to become wise by the miserable experience of those, who have gone before them; they would know, that their supreme danger lies here; that every ruler who flatters them, that every demagogue, is a liar; that he deceives them for his own advantage, not for theirs; for the overthrow of their liberty, not for its establishment; for the ruin of their interests, not for their peace, prosperity, or safety.

If a ruler hearken to lies, says *Solomon*, *all his servants are wicked. Judgment*, saith the prophet *Isaiah*, *is turned away backward; and Justice standeth afar off.* What was the source of these calamities? Let the prophet himself answer. *Truth is fallen in the streets, and* therefore *Equity cannot enter.* It is the Glorious Character of Him, whose Dominion *is as the light of the morning, of a morning without clouds, and as the clear shining of the sun after rain upon the tender herb of the field, that He shall judge the people with Truth.* It is a divine characteristic of the Infinite Ruler, that *his paths are Mercy and Truth.* Such must be the character of earthly Rulers, if they would be *Ministers of* God *for good;* or if their subjects are to be either safe, or happy.

But we need not appeal to a numerous train of Scriptural texts for instruction on this subject. In the 144th Psalm there is the strongest, and perhaps the most comprehensive, exhibition of its importance, which can be found even in the Scriptural pages, and

which ever will be found in the language of men. In this portion of the sacred canon, *David*, contemplating the wars, in which he had been, and more probably those, in which he was at that very time, engaged; remembering the usual care, and good providence, of GOD, exercised towards him in his contests with his enemies; and feeling, that this was amply sufficient for his safety, and success, in every case of hostility, waged by open force; breaks out in a joyful song of exultation for these blessings, as already partly received, and as partly secured to him for the time to come. *Blessed be* JEHOVAH, *my strength, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: My goodness, and my fortress, my high tower and my deliverer, my shield, and he, in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.*

After some short reflections on the humble, and undeserving, character of man, naturally excited by the contemplation of these mercies, he turns his eye to the state of his own kingdom, probably convulsed at that time by the rebellion of *Absalom;* a rebellion, generated, and supported, by falsehood; he exclaims, *Bow thy heavens, O* JEHOVAH, *and come down; touch the mountains, and they shall smoke: cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them: send thine hand from above: rid me, and deliver me, out of the great waters, from the hand of strange children; whose mouth speaketh vanity,* (that is, lies) *and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.* To this great man, the ordinary blessings of God's providence to him and his people appeared a defence amply sufficient, and sources of victory sure and abundant, against the violence of war, and enemies in arms. But, when he came to consider the danger, which threatened his government and nation from the insidious attacks of deception, he felt, that a new and singular interference of God was necessary for the deliverance of himself, and his people. Then it became necessary, that God should *bow the heavens, and come down;* that he should set the mountains on fire; that he should *cast forth his lightning, to scatter, and shoot out his arrows, to destroy* these children of falsehood. Such in his view was the danger to the people of Israel from the deceptions, practised upon them, that nothing less than these wonderful exertions of Divine Power would insure their safety.

At the same time, he informs us in the strongest terms, that a deliverance from this terrible kind of warfare, from the spirit which generated it, and from the persons by whom it was carried on, was indispensable to the internal prosperity of the nation, both moral and secular. *Rid me,* he exclaims again, *and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh lies, and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood: that our sons may be as plants, grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace; that our garners may be full, affording all manner of store; that our*

sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets; that our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets. Happy, he subjoins, *is that people, that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people, whose God is* JEHOVAH.

These are blessings, which cannot be found in a nation, among whom falsehood prevails. There, men will not labour to produce them: there, God will not give them. They are blessings which Truth leads in her train; blessings, which God showers upon a people, who love truth. But at the approach of falsehood they shrink, languish, and expire.

All this, it is to be remembered, was written by *David;* one of the greatest and wisest men, whom the world has ever seen. He knew by experience every danger from war; from open enemies, embodied in powerful armies. By the same experience he was perfectly acquainted, also, with the evils, which spring from falsehood. The evils of the latter class he perceived, by actual trial, to be immensely greater than those of the former. In these observations he has barely told us what passed under his own eye, and constituted his own case. Nay more, he has told all this directly to his Maker; and in a Psalm, addressed directly to him, has poured forth the praises, which he esteemed due, and prayed for the assistance, which he deemed necessary. In these circumstances, the sincerity of the suppliant cannot be questioned.

But it is further to be remembered, that this Psalm was dictated by the inspiration of God. It is all, therefore, exactly just, and true. Nothing is diminished: nothing is exaggerated. Falsehood is just so much more dangerous, in the ordinary circumstances of mankind, than war; its evils are just so much more terrible; and peculiar interpositions of God, to deliver mankind from their efficacy, are in this very manner indispensable. Truth, also, is accompanied, and followed by all these blessings; blessings which, fairly understood, involve the whole prosperity of a people. At the same time, falsehood either prevents, or destroys, them all: or, in other words, ruins the nation in which it prevails.

3. *Falsehood is equally pernicious to the Private interests of mankind.*

A great proportion of all their miscarriages in the pursuit of happiness are suffered by mankind from *Intentional Misinformation only.* A man is falsely informed of the state of the markets; and conveys his property to a ruinous sale. He wishes to employ an agent, to manage his business; to instruct his children; or to plead his cause. He wishes to employ a physician, to attend his family in cases of sickness, or a clergyman to preach for himself, and his neighbours. The character of each of these men is represented to him falsely. Of consequence, his business is mismanaged; his children are half-taught; his cause is lost by ignorance, or treachery; his family are hastened to the grave by an empiric;

and himself, and his neighbours, by false exhibitions of the Gospel, are led to perdition. The beggar cheats him by a false tale of wo. The false friend betrays his interests, and his secrets. A false witness swears away his rights: and a false judge perverts the law to his ruin. A flatterer deceives him into fatal apprehensions concerning his own excellencies. A censurer breaks his spirits by unfounded, and malignant, representations of his defects: and a sophist cheats him out of truth, virtue, and heaven. The frauds practised, on our fellow-men, which were either recited, or alluded to, in a preceding discourse on that subject, are all perpetrated by the instrumentality of falsehood. This Harpy seizes on every human enjoyment, and on every human interest; destroys whatever is in her power; and pollutes, and distresses, wherever she is unable to destroy.

4. *Equally pernicious is Falsehood to the Personal interests of the Liar himself.*

The importance of this truth will appear in the following particulars.

In the First Place. *Lying is always followed by Reproaches of Conscience.*

Mankind with a single voice have pronounced Lying to be a gross and enormous sin. This is the dictate of every other religion, and every other law, as well as of the law and the religion of God. To this universal testimony, the conscience of every individual unites its own solemn accord; and whenever a lie is uttered, proclaims the guilt of the criminal with an affecting and awful voice. At the sound of this remonstrance, the soul trembles, and shrinks; and before the bar of this severe judge, is compelled to plead guilty, without a hope of escape.

Nor is it compelled only to acknowledge its *guilt*, but also clearly to see, and deeply to feel, its peculiar *debasement*. A liar is obliged irresistibly to feel that he is sunk below the level of men. His mind is a house of pollution; a haunt of every despicable purpose, and every degrading thought. Thus his character, as seen by himself, lies upon him like *a heavy burden*, too *grievous to be borne;* a load, which he can neither carry, nor lay down.

In the mean time, Conscience, faithful to her office, holds up to his view in terrible forebodings the anger of God against lying lips; and presents to him alarming anticipations of the dreadful account, which he will be obliged to give at the future Judgment. Such, I mean, is the fact, unless, through the want of a religious education, he is destitute of moral principle; or by a repetition of crimes, his *Conscience* has become *seared, as with an hot iron.*

Secondly. *The Liar is continually tormented by the fear of detection.*

A liar is never safe. It is so much the interest of mankind to expose this crime; and it is so often actually exposed; that the danger is always great, and always felt by the criminal. Should a detection take place; the consequences, he knows, must be distressing. The shame, the hatred, the contempt, and the punishment, which in this case will arrest him, he knows not how to meet with a steady eye. His terrified mind is, therefore, in a perpetual alarm; and sees these evils always at the door. The *path* of life, therefore, is to him *a hedge of thorns*.

Thirdly. *Should he be detected, as he invariably will be, he is compelled to suffer many excruciating evils.*

Particularly, he is necessitated to invent many falsehoods, to gain the object, or prevent the evils, of one.

Truth is always plain and consistent; the highway, in which the *way-faring man, though a fool, need not err.* Falsehood is a by-path; crooked, perplexed, and blind; in which every traveller is soon bewildered and lost. No liar can possibly foresee either the nature, or the number, of the difficulties, into which he will plunge himself by a single lie. These difficulties he will often feel himself compelled to obviate, by such means as are in his power. Usually, no other means will offer themselves to him for this purpose beside a succession of lies. Thus, one falsehood, in a sense, necessarily draws after it another, and another. Nor is any mind, which begins this course, sufficiently comprehensive to know where it will end.

Those, whom he has deceived, also, will often resent, and often severely revenge, the abuse. In one manner, and another, he is not unfrequently punished with severity. Always he is disgraced, reproached, stung with contempt, and insulted with derision. Decent men shun his company. Parents warn their children to beware of him. The finger of scorn points him out, the hiss of infamy follows him in the street. Even villains, of most other sorts, feel themselves superior to him.

His reputation, of course, is lost. Those, whom he has deceived, will take sure and exemplary vengeance in publishing the deception to the world. His rivals will trumpet it, to rise above him: his kindred villains, to turn the eyes of mankind from their own guilt. Should they even be silent, he will disclose it himself. The safety, and success, which he has found in uttering one falsehood, will embolden him to utter another, and another, until he is detected. When this is done, he sinks speedily into absolute contempt. The proverb, "*once a liar and always a liar*," will meet him, as a label, from every mouth in the street.

In this character, all persons will feel themselves to be his superiors; and will take effectual care to announce this superiority. The tongues of multitudes will proclaim it in the most stinging terms. The eyes of more will look down upon him with haughtiness and scorn: while the conduct of all will attest his degrada-

tion with a visible mixture of pity and abhorrence. Of course, he will be obliged to feel, as well as to appear, only in the character of a mean, debased wretch; inferior to his kind; and to act an under, servile part in every scene of life. He can maintain no cause; assert no fact; make no promise; face no man; and meet no eye: but is forced to falter, and fall, even before those, with whom he would once have disdained to acknowledge an acquaintance.

As he loses all confidence; he loses, with it, every opportunity of acquiring useful and reputable employment. None will trust him with their property; none will commit to him their business; because all will expect to be rewarded by him with baseness and treachery.

But all men are dependent on their fellow-men. Peculiarly is this true of those, who are young. Every youth is necessitated to lean in no small degree, on those, who are already in possession of the great business of mankind. Veracity, to them, is the door to confidence; confidence, to useful employment; and useful employment, to property, reputation, influence, and a prosperous and useful life. This door the liar has voluntarily shut against himself; and can be admitted neither to the good offices, nor even to the company, of those, on whom he chiefly depends, under God, for every worldly blessing.

Thus he involves himself in innumerable distresses; and exposes himself to innumerable temptations. He is poor, almost of course. Honest poverty is always, and most deservedly, respectable. But poverty, which grows out of vice, ensures contempt and abhorrence; and is encircled by numberless temptations, which honest poverty never knew. I have already observed, that the liar is almost irresistibly prompted to a succession of falsehoods, in order to escape the dangers of the first. To these he is strongly solicited to add perjury; to corrupt others, that he may countenance himself; to cheat, that he may acquire what he cannot gain by lying; and to steal, that he may possess himself of what he cannot gain by cheating.

All these scandalous vices are soon fixed into habits: and these habits, every day, acquire new accessions of strength. His declension, therefore, is rapid and dreadful. From the company, conversation, and example, of good men, indulged more or less to most sinners, he is excluded of course. Virtue may pity, but cannot consort with him. His touch is contagious; and his very breath carries infection with it, wherever he goes. By this exclusion, he loses a blessing of more value, than all the good, which falsehood ever sought, or found.

In this manner he goes on, hardening his heart, and polluting his life. His conscience becomes seared; and sooner than he could have originally mistrusted, he is given over to a reprobate

mind. In the end, he dies a bitter death; and closes a shameful, wretched life, with a miserable eternity.

The *Preventives of this deplorable vice* may be advantageously considered *as they respect children under the education of their parents, and persons arrived at years of discretion.*

The foundation of all moral good is best laid in childhood. This season, therefore, is to be regarded as of supreme importance, and husbanded for this great purpose with supreme solicitude. I shall address my observations on this subject directly to Parents. To accomplish this invaluable end, so indispensable to the present and eternal welfare of your children, *Teach them,*

1. *Always to speak truth, by precept and example.*

Inculcate on them, from the moment in which they are able to speak at all, and inculcate daily, the immense importance of speaking truth. Truth is so much more easily, and so much more naturally, spoken than falsehood, that children usually speak truth of course. Facts always present it; the mind always perceives it; the tongue always utters it; without effort or contrivance. Falsehood, on the contrary, must ever be invented, and continually laboured into existence. Before this labour has commenced, truth must be effectually impressed on the conscience, and instamped on the heart.

Teach them, that Veracity is inestimably useful; that it will make them loved, trusted, honoured, and befriended; and will save them from shame, neglect, reproach, and poverty, from extreme humiliation, and the terrors of a condemning conscience. Teach them, that Lying will prevent all these blessings, and entail upon them all these sufferings; that it will wither their reputation, their comforts, and their hopes; that, deformed with this sin, they will be pitied by every good, and insulted by every bad, man; that their enemies will tread them under foot, while their friends cannot protect them; and that their character, when once habitually blackened by falsehood, can never be made white again.

Teach them, that every equivocal, every prevaricating, every evasive, expression, every thing which partakes of duplicity, is radically a lie; and that, if they indulge themselves in these humbler efforts of falsehood, they will soon sink to the lowest degradations of villany.

Teach them, that the Eternal God, the God of Truth, to whom *lying lips are an abomination*, hears, marks, and records, every thing, which they speak; and that this record will be the foundation of their final sentence at the Great Day.

Discourage in them, at all times, a propensity to idle talk; to story-telling; particularly to the telling of marvellous stories; the recital of private history; the news of the neighbourhood; and the giving of characters. Lead them carefully, whenever they converse concerning others, to such conversation, and such only, as is prudent, and kind: and accustom them to feel, that

they cannot speak of others in this manner, it is usually both their duty, and their interest, not to speak at all. Teach them faithfully to keep, and never to betray, the secrets entrusted to them, and effectually repress in them a disposition to pry into the personal and domestic concerns of others.

What you thus communicate by your instruction, endeavour to complete by your example. Show, on all occasions, the most solemn, and the most intense, regard to truth. Speak truth to them exactly, on every occasion, whether in earnest, or in jest. Promise them nothing, which you do not faithfully resolve to fulfil. Fulfil faithfully all that you promise, however difficult, or inconvenient, may be the fulfilment. If at any time, and by any circumstances, they are led to suppose, that you have failed to perform your promise exactly; or if the performance has at any time, subsequent to the promise, become unlawful, or impossible; carefully remove every suspicion, which they may entertain concerning your veracity, by a diligent explanation of every doubtful, or unknown circumstance; and show them, that your conduct has been strictly conformed to the rigid dictates of truth.

At the same time, oblige them to fulfil all their own promises, however self-denying the fulfilment may be to them, and however expensive, or troublesome, to you. This discipline will, ere long, teach them not to promise rashly, and to regard every promise, which they make, as sacred and unalterable.

Universally, make the establishment of an unwarping veracity in their minds, a prime, and ever-present, object of your parental labours; and, until this object is accomplished, devote to it the energy of your minds, and the efforts of your lives.

2. *Prevent them from keeping Company with deceitful persons.*

Forbid them *absolutely* to consort with those, who are known to be of this character. Restrain them from every place, frequented by such persons; from taverns; from public corners; from horse-races; and, universally, from every lounging idle resort. The plague is usually taken by infection. He, therefore, who is on healthy ground, will be safe. Suffer your children, then, on no occasion to become the companions of loose, immoral persons. Of them your children will learn to lie, of course; and *that*, however faithful may be your instructions, and however unspotted your example. Remember, yourselves, and teach them, that the *companion of fools shall be destroyed.*

3. *If your children are at any time guilty of deceit; endeavour by the best means in your power to prevent every future transgression of the same nature.*

Rehearse to them, solemnly and kindly, all the interesting considerations, which I have mentioned, and every other useful thought, which your own minds may suggest. Present to them, particularly, clear, affecting views of their guilt, and their danger; and forcibly exhibit to them the ruinous efficacy of falsehood on every

interest of time, and eternity. If the transgression demands a punishment; never administer it in a passion. Delay the administration, not only until you are free from every resentful emotion, but until you are secure of preserving your equanimity in spite of any incidental provocation, and are absolutely collected, and self-controlled. In this state of mind, accompany the discipline with solemn instructions, calm reproofs, and affectionate testimonies of the mingled pain and pity, with which you regard the guilty transaction

If one punishment, if, for example, correction, fails of producing a reformation; vary your inflictions, successively, through the several modes of discipline, until you have gained the object. Shame, or confinement, will often accomplish what correction cannot. If these prove ineffectual; the denial of favourite indulgences, and the deprivation of customary privileges, will often produce reformation. A string may almost always be struck, which will accord with the state of the heart; an effort made, which will ensure a victory.

In the mean time, if your child is charged with some other fault, and frankly tells the truth concerning it; remit either the whole, or a part, of the punishment, due to his crime, discretionarily; as a proof of the high value which you place upon his veracity.

4. *Commend them to the constant care and blessing of God.*

Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain. As God alone *can* preserve them; so, if you ask Him in earnest, you have every reason to hope that He *will*.

I shall now address the subject to all such persons as have arrived at that period of life, in which they are capable of taking some useful care of themselves. To such persons the following directions may be means of guarding against this fatal evil.

1. *Watch faithfully over your speech.*

Consider, before you speak, whether what you are about to say is true, right, kind, and useful; or false, unkind, and mischievous; and determine to utter nothing, until you are satisfied. *Steadily resist a propensity to talk much;* remembering, that *in a multitude of words there wanteth not sin:* and never speak at all, unless some good purpose be answered; unless some useful information be given; some innocent pleasure communicated; or some other lawful end accomplished.

Resist a disposition to give characters; to recite family-news; to expose private failings; and to ridicule personal imperfections. Ask yourselves whether you would be willing, that your own failings should be published, repeated, and ridiculed. Remember, that others, thus attacked, will feel as you would feel; and that, as you would resent such a base intrusion upon your peace, so they, when in the same manner wounded by you, will become your enemies; and will sooner or later find an opportunity of making you feel their resentment. Remember further, that even

those, who hear, and applaud, what you say, may yet, and often do, despise you for saying it; that they will ever afterwards regard you with suspicion, shun you as dangerous to their safety, and characterize you as nuisances to society. In this manner, before you are aware, your characters will become odious, and your reputation be lost.

When you repeat any thing, strive to repeat it exactly. Neither enhance, nor lessen. Colour nothing beyond the strict truth. Recite that, and that only, which you believe; and express no more confidence in what you recite, than you really feel. Recite, also, so much of the circumstances, drift, and tendency, of the transaction, which is your subject, as fairly to explain its true nature, and the real character, and conduct of those who were concerned.

Refrain from speaking when you are in a passion. All passionate words are dangerous and sinful. The wisest, and most guarded, persons, when provoked, utter, at times, things which they regret ever afterwards. *Moses*, the meekest of all men, when provoked at *Meribah*, *spoke unadvisedly with his lips;* and was forbidden to enter the Land of Promise.

Guard, especially, against making promises in a passion. Such promises will often involve you in serious difficulties; and prove snares and traps to your feet. You will feel a strong reluctance to fulfil, and powerful temptations to break, them: temptations, which frequently overcome vigorous resolutions, subvert established reputation, and lead their miserable victims fatally astray.

Many persons, and youths more than almost any others, are prone to make rash and inconsiderate promises. Few propensities are more unhappy than this; or conduct men to more bitter consequences. Universally resolve to make no promise, when it can fairly be avoided. When it cannot, guard it with such conditions as shall render it certainly safe. Consider, particularly, whether you possess the means of a faithful performance: if not, make no promises. In this manner you will escape the most dangerous temptations to falsehood, and the most alarming exposures to shame and ruin.

2. *Fix in your minds the most solemn resolutions to speak Truth only.*

Call to mind, daily, the immense advantages of Truth, and the immense evils of Falsehood. These advantages resolve to acquire: these evils determine not to suffer. Both, to a considerable extent, have been set before you. Ponder them deeply, and daily, as their importance deserves. *Determine that no person shall ever have it in his power to charge you with falsehood.* Determine never to say any thing, which shall enable your enemies to triumph, or force your friends to blush; to say nothing, which you would be ashamed to have recorded of you; nothing, which shall forbid you to look an honest man in the face; nothing, which in the pres-

ence of such a man shall force your eyes, when they meet his, to labour, linger, and fall.

Resolve firmly never to flatter any man. Speak that, which is good, of others, when you can; and when you cannot, speak, at least in ordinary cases, nothing. Remember, that *a flattering mouth worketh ruin* for him who flatters, as well as for him who is flattered. Be able, therefore, with *Elihu* nobly to say, *Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person; neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles: in so doing my Maker would soon take me away.* To strengthen your resolutions, remember alway, that, when you are once embarked in deceit, you are wholly afloat; will be driven you know not whither without either compass or pilot; and will be environed by rocks and shoals, threatening you unceasingly with irremediable destruction.

3. *Frequent the Company of Wise and Good men only.*

In this society you will find temptations, not spread before you, but taken away; examples, which will not corrupt, but strengthen you in virtue. Here you will always find honour, peace, and profit, instead of shame, anxiety, and ruin. If you will seek this society, and this only; you will be welcomed to their esteem, and good offices; and will gain from their precepts and example, wisdom, truth, noble sentiments, and the most excellent conduct. These they will enforce by ten thousand motives, unthought of by licentious men, instinctively rising up to view, presented in strong lights, and exhibited with powerful persuasion. The excellency, usefulness, and glory, of virtue they will unfold to you in many ways, of which loose men never entertain a thought, and of which you yourselves have probably not formed a conception. This divine object, also, they will commend to your adoption by the charms of an amiable, honourable, and delightful Example. Their sentiments you will imbibe, even before you are aware. Their exalted spirit you will catch. Their dignified life you will make your own.

Here, you will soon learn to wonder, to be astonished, that yourselves, that any being who possesses a rational mind, could ever frequent, or ever think for a moment of frequenting, the haunts of licentious men; the scenes of profaneness, gaming, fraud, and falsehood; where darkness spreads her funeral pall; where oaths and obscenity, lies and blasphemies, furnish a dreadful prelude to a more enormous perpetration of the same foul sins in the world of perdition. To exchange the society which I have recommended for these haunts, would, in your own view, be to quit the splendours of a palace for the loathsome horrors of a jail; to wander from the sweets of *Eden* into the gloom, the chains, and the madness, of a dungeon.

4. *To strengthen yourselves in all the conduct, which I have recommended, labour to fix in your minds a strong, solemn, and habitual, sense of the amazing importance of speaking truth alway.*

Truth is the foundation of all virtue, and of all permanent happiness. Establish this great doctrine in your minds so, that it shall never be forgotten; so, that it shall be a part of your whole train of thinking, and inwoven, as an habitual, commanding principle, in all your conduct. Bring it home to your hearts; and spurn at the thought of regarding it even with a momentary indifference.

Remember, that Confidence is the foundation of all good; that unless you can confide in others, you cannot live a single day with comfort, or even with safety; that you can confide no farther than others speak truth, and fulfil promises; and that universal distrust would, to yourselves and others, be universal misery; would unhinge every expectation, and every hope; would annihilate all the business of intelligent beings; would set them at variance with each other, and with God; and would make the Universe a solitude and a desert.

Remember, that every human concern is decided by testimony; that he, who weakens it, is an enemy to mankind, and makes havoc of human happiness. Realize, that, if by influence, or example, you destroy, or diminish, the confidence of men; if you lessen the sense of the obligations to veracity; you will become pests of the Universe, and foes of every intelligent being, which it contains.

Call to mind, that by falsehood you will debase yourselves beyond measure; cut off all your hopes of becoming virtuous; arm your consciences against your peace: and make yourselves objects of contempt, indignation, and abhorrence.

Recollect daily, that the first step, which you take in falsehood, is the commencement of this boundless evil; that the way to become an abandoned liar is to conceal truth; to equivocate; to evade; to utter sportive falsehood; to rehearse marvellous stories; to recite the tales of private history; and to colour what you recite with hues, and stains, mixed by yourselves. In all these things you may feel at your ease; may profess yourselves to be, and may often actually be, in sport. So is the *madman, who scatters firebrands, arrows, and death.*

Remember, last of all, that the time, in which your lot is cast, is pre-eminently a time, in which the sense of truth is weakened, and the consciousness of moral obligation to a wonderful degree forgotten. In this day, falsehood has come forth to the public eye with her brazen front unveiled; her cheek without even a tinge; and her snaky tongue newly dipt in poison. Her professed enemies are changed into friends; her friends into worshippers. *The* whole *world wonders* after her. Afraid, no longer, of the contempt of society, or the brand of public justice, she enters familiarly into the study of the philosopher, the hall of deliberation, and the palace of power; and dictates instructions, laws, edicts, and manifestoes, to nations. In her train, parties, princes, and nations, are

proud to be enrolled. How immense, then, how unceasing, how universal, is the danger to you. Awake to that danger, and feel, that you are struggling for your all.

Above all things, commit yourselves to God in prayer. Ask him; and he will make you watchful, wise, and steadfast in your duty. Ask him; and he will teach you to love, and enable you to speak, truth only; until you arrive at that glorious world, where truth only is spoken by its happy inhabitants, and where all its blessings are realized with increasing delight, throughout ages which know no end.

SERMON CXXVIII.

NINTH COMMANDMENT.—SLANDER.

EXODUS XX. 16.—*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

IN the last discourse, but one, I proposed to consider *Falsehood under the two Heads of*

Lying; and,

Slander.

The former of these I have discussed at length. I shall now proceed to the consideration of the latter; and shall arrange my Observations under the following heads.

I. *The Nature of Slander;*

II. *The Modes in which it is practised;*

III. *The Evils of it;* and,

IV. *Dissuasives from it.*

I. Slander may be thus defined. *It is that Conduct, which injuriously lessens, or destroys, another's Reputation.*

In most cases, *Words* are made the vehicle of Slander. It may, however, be accomplished without words. When we are reasonably expected to give a fair character of another, we may easily, and deeply, slander him by our *Silence.* We may also accomplish the same purpose by our *Actions:* as when we withhold our countenance from a man, who, in ordinary circumstances, might fairly expect to enjoy it; withdraw from him business, with which he has heretofore been entrusted; or turn him out of our service without alleging any reasons for our conduct. In these and the like cases, we give such proofs of suspecting him, ourselves, as to entail upon him, in greater or less degrees, the suspicion of others.

Slander is perpetrated *sometimes with design,* and *sometimes through inattention.* In the former case, it is perpetrated with an intention to destroy happiness; in the latter from indifference to it. In the former case it springs from malice; in the latter, from that sordid insensibility to the interests of others, which is little less censurable. It will be unnecessary to distinguish them any farther.

II. Slander is most frequently practised in the following Modes.

1. *In direct and false Aspersions.*

The Slanderer commences this malignant employment by inventing, and fabricating, tales of falsehood concerning the person, who either the object of his hatred, or the subject of his diversion.

To the fabricator of these tales all the subsequent mischief, which arises from them, is supremely chargeable.

The second step is the rehearsing of such stories, after they have been told to us by others. In this step, we do not participate in all the guilt, which is attendant on the first. But both the guilt, and the mischief, are often greater. The spirit, with which we rehearse tales of slander, may be more malignant than that which gave birth to them; and the consequences may be incomparably worse. The inventor may have been a thoughtless, ignorant, giddy-minded man; without consideration, and without character. We, on the contrary, may possess reputation, forecast, and a correct knowledge of human concerns; may comprehend the whole efficacy of the tale; may perceive its falsehood; and may enjoy a base pleasure in giving it the most effectual operation. Thus, although not chargeable with the guilt of fabricating falsehood, we may become much more criminal than the fabricator.

Whatever is our situation, we lend, in this case, our own weight to the story; and, in this manner, we sometimes do all, and not unfrequently most, of the mischief, of which the story becomes the instrument. The inventors of such tales are *usually* persons of no reputation; and, if reputable at first, they soon destroy their character by this very employment. Were they, then, disregarded, and their tales not repeated; both would sink at once into absolute contempt. But when persons of a fair character take up such stories, and soberly rehearse them; the falsehood acquires new strength, and spreads with a new and most unhappy influence. This base coin they have not, indeed, made; but they have passed it; and given it a currency, which it could never have derived from the maker. Let no person, then, think himself at all justified in reciting a tale of slander by the very common indeed, but very wretched, excuse, dictated, and adopted, only by the coarsest and most vulgar morality; *that they heard it from others.* Guilt fastens on every traveller in this base and by-path, and at every step in his progress.

Some persons perpetrate this iniquity with designs directly malicious. Some, from a busy, meddling disposition, always unsatisfied, unless when interfering in the concerns of others: and some, from a wish to be thought extensively acquainted with private history. All these are characterized in the Scriptures by the significant names of *busy-bodies*, and *tale-bearers;* and are considered there, and every where else, as the disturbers and pests of society. They are characterized in the most disadvantageous manner, Levit. xix. 16. *Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people; neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour. I am the Lord.* And again, in Prov. xxvi. 20, &c. *The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds. Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out.* They are classed with the

worst of mankind, 1 Pet. iv. 15. *Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters*

The character, given of them in the Scriptures, is the character, given of them by Common sense. In every age, and country, they have been objects of contempt and abhorrence. Prudent men have every where shunned them; and pointed them out to their friends, and children, as enemies, as gins and snares, which they were ever cautiously to spy out, and eagerly to avoid. Every company, into which they enter, after their character is known, feels a sudden pressure upon its thoughts, and an alarm for its peace and safety. The aspect is changed at once. The features, relaxed by ease, friendship, and confidence, are suddenly contracted, and fixed. The eye quits its smile of serenity and pleasure; and settles itself in the attitude of vigilance, apprehensive and ill-boding; and the conversation, which sprang from the heart, reciprocated friendship, and awakened delight, is chilled down in a moment into general, unmeaning observations; adopted, only because they have no meaning, and because no tale of mischief can be told about them. When such a man resides in a neighbourhood; a thick cloud hangs over all its enjoyments. When he removes; it is again covered with cheerfulness and sunshine.

With a criminality, often greater, we slander others by giving accounts concerning them, which are true. No excuse is more frequently, or more confidently, pleaded as an ample justification of malignant stories concerning others, than this; *that they are true.* The author of ill-natured tales, or remarks, is not indeed chargeable, in this case, with the crime of falsehood. Still he may be really, and eminently, criminal. If the good name of our neighbour be injured; the great evil in question is done. If it be injured by *us;* the evil is done by *us.* If we have injured it with pleasure; our malevolence is real; and therefore our guilt is real. That guilt also may be as great, or greater, in the eye of God, than any, which even we ourselves have attributed to the inventor of a slanderous story.

Be it so, that our neighbour has slipped: and that he has sinned against God. Still, *if his sin remain with him*, he may repent; and his repentance may render his character better, and his hopes brighter, than ours. Still, his talents may be employed for the benefit of himself, his family, and mankind. All this benefit, and all the comfort, which he, and his, might enjoy, we may thus prevent, and blast for ever.

My neighbour is a merchant. In a course of honest industry, he is reduced by misfortunes to failing circumstances. The fact is known to me. I publish it. His creditors, anxious to secure, as far as may be, their own property, seize upon his effects; and perhaps confine him in a prison. Thus he may be completely ruin-

ed by a story, which I have told; and a story, which is true. Thus, also, his family are reduced to want; and see their hopes of support, education, usefulness, and comfort, finally destroyed.

Had I, with the prudence and benevolence which Christianity inspires, confined this secret within my own breast; the industry of my neighbour, his skill in business, his integrity, and the credit which he had merited, and gained, by these qualifications, would have enabled him to continue in trade without interruption; and probably to acquire all the necessary means of comfort and prosperity for himself and his family. These blessings I have prevented; and am chargeable with the prevention. I have not, indeed, told a falsehood; but I have done mischief, which is incalculable, and which a falsehood, in the case supposed, could not have done.

Why have I done this mischief? There was no necessity, that my neighbour should be injured; that his failings should be published; that his character should be lowered; that his misfortunes should be announced to the world; that the peace of his family should be wounded, their enjoyments cut off, and their hopes blasted in the bud. In all this there is no profit to me, nor to mankind: nor, unless I am possessed of the spirit of a fiend, can there be any pleasure.

It is evident, therefore, beyond debate, that he, who tells a mischievous story, and that he, who by declaring his belief of a mischievous story, told by others, lends it the credit and sanction of his own authority, are essentially, and alike, guilty of slander. In the conduct specified, both, also, are without excuse.

So long as persons of reputation will either repeat the false stories of others, invented for the purpose of lowering, or destroying, character; or will publish malignant truths, concerning others; the peace, the good name, and the comfort, of mankind will be invaded and destroyed.

2. *Slander may be practised without inventing, or repeating malignant stories, whether true or false.*

This may be done, in the first place, *by listening to the slanderous stories of others.*

He, who listens to a story of this nature without expressing his disapprobation, declares by his conduct, the strongest of all attestations, that he considers it as meriting his attention, and, in some degree, his belief. This belief, and even this attention, from persons of respectability, will give the slander a weight, and currency which it could never have derived from the inventor. Those who see us listen in this manner, will conclude of course, that the slander, in our view, has foundation, and importance. Hence they will be induced both to believe, and to report, what, otherwise, they would have disregarded.

The inventor of slander derives all his consequence, and all his encouragement, from the countenance, lent to him by others. But to believe is to countenance him: to listen is to countenance him. By listening to him, therefore, we give life and activity to his mischievous fabrications; and lend them most of their power to do hurt. Besides, by doing this we keep the spirit of slander alive in his breast; and make him feel secure of the consequence, which he hopes to gain by this course of conduct: the consequence, which is his principal motive to sin. In this manner, we contribute to the existence of future slanderers, and, in a manner possessed of no contemptible efficacy, aid the diffusion of calumny through the world. This nuisance to society, this pest to mankind, we sustain, cherish, and send abroad, to destroy the peace of those around us. How plainly is he, who acts in this manner, a nuisance to his fellow-men!

Both Reason and Revelation, both common sense and common good nature, demand, on the contrary, that, whenever our neighbour's character is attacked, we should appear openly in his defence. In very few ways can we so often, or so greatly, befriend others, as by supporting their good name; and in very few cases will our kindness be so deeply, or so gratefully, felt. The person, thus attacked, is absent of course; and cannot, therefore, defend himself. If we do not defend him; he is left naked to the attack, and to all its malignant consequences. Our silence cannot but injure him seriously. It may be the means of his ruin. Who would not wish, in such a case, to have his own character defended? Who, then, is not bound to defend that of another? Were this great Law of righteousness duly felt; were its injunctions, as they respect the case under consideration, faithfully obeyed; what a horde of busy-bodies, tale-bearers, and calumniators, would be broken down! What an endless multitude of base and snaky efforts against the peace of society, and the comfort of families, would in this way be crushed at once!

Secondly. *If our silence, when tales of slander are reported, is thus injurious to others: the declaration, that we believe them, is still more criminal.*

A multitude of persons not only suffer slander to pass without censure, or opposition, but readily believe it; and without hesitation declare this belief. If they do not repeat it to others; their consciences appear to be satisfied. Even when they give it no credit, they suffer others quietly to repeat it, not only without animadversion, but without even hinting their disbelief. Through a company of such persons a calumny rolls on without an impediment; without a single generous effort to check its progress. On the contrary, it fares like a Spy in a venal, mercenary army, whom none will detect, and whose escape all will favour, because all are hollow-hearted and false. If it is attended with evidence moderately plausible, they declare their belief of it; and thus help it

onward to the belief of others. If it be supported by no evidence whatever, they will not declare their disbelief of it: thus suffering it to proceed without interruption, and to gain credit wherever it may.

There is in the human breast a strong propensity to Censorious ness. We need no instruction to teach us, that our fellow-men are by every censure, which adheres to them, lowered beneath their customary level. Nor do we discern with less readiness, that whatever sinks those around us, raises comparatively ourselves. With this self-exaltation, despicable as are the means by which it is achieved, we, whenever we become the authors of it, are despicable enough to be gratified: and the gratification, base and contemptible as it is, is still eagerly sought, and highly enjoyed, by many such minds, as are found in the present world.

When these persons hear the characters of others aspersed, they hear it with pleasure; and with pleasure believe the aspersion. Their faith, here, is not given to evidence: it does not wait for evidence. If evidence be furnished, indeed, it is so much the better; because it is expected to command the faith of others also. But no evidence is necessary to ensure the faith of these persons. The tale pleases, because it involves the degradation of a neighbour; a rival; a superior; or some other object of jealousy. It is believed, because they wish it to be true. Still, many such persons are too cautious to rehearse it again; and with their avoidance of this additional injury, their cold, heartless consciences are satisfied.

III. *The Evils of Slander are either Personal, or Public.*

1. *The Personal Evils of Slander*, by which I intend the sufferings experienced from it by Individuals, *are the pain felt, and the injuries derived, from the loss of a Good name.*

A good name is *the Estimation, in which we are holden by others on account of our good qualities, and our good conduct.* Such a name is declared by God Himself to be *better than precious ointment.* Eccles. vii. 1. And in Proverbs xxii. 1, *a good name is* said to be *better than great riches, and loving-favour*, that is, the favourable emotions, exercised towards such, as possess a good name, better *than silver and gold. Silver and gold*, particularly when possessed in such accumulations as constitute *great riches*, are, proverbially, the supreme objects, which this world furnishes, of human desires. As such, they are customarily used, as objects of comparison, to illustrate the value of things eminently precious. Thus, in the Scriptures themselves, we are informed, that *the Law of the Lord is more to be chosen than the most fine gold.* Thus, also, *Job* says of the Wisdom, which is the obedience of that Law, that *it cannot be gotten for gold; neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.*

Precious ointment, as intended by a *Jewish* writer, probably denotes that, which was used to anoint the High Priest, and the kings

of the *Jewish* nation. The materials, of which it was composed, are well known to have been pre-eminently costly and valuable; far more so, than the most fine gold. In this point of view, precious ointment was in the mouth of an *Israelite*, perhaps, the strongest conceivable illustration of the value of a good name. At the same time, this unguent, being composed of the richest and most elegant aromatic substances, diffused, extensively, the most delightful fragrance, wherever it was employed. With reference to this fine character, the Psalmist adopts it as a charming illustration of one of the most charming objects, ever seen in the present world. *Behold*, he exclaims, *how good, and how pleasant, it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head of Aaron, that went down to the skirts of his garment; as the dew of Hermon, that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing; even life for evermore.* A more exquisite illustration of the delightful impression, made by a fair character, could not be given.

Such a character is of inestimable value to the possessor, if considered merely *as a source of Enjoyment.* The esteem of our fellow-men is, probably, regarded by the great body of mankind, as standing, in the list of enjoyments, next to self-approbation. Common sense, as well as the Scriptures, pronounces *loving-favour to be better than silver and gold.* The opinion of wise and good men may be considered, in all ordinary cases, as the best criterion of worth on this side of the grave; and their good-will, which always accompanies their esteem, as the richest possession, which does not descend immediately from Heaven. Even in that happy world, the uninterrupted, and intense, complacency of its glorious inhabitants will, after the favour of God, and the peace of a self-approving mind, constitute the prime ingredient of eternal joy.

In the world of misery, on the contrary, all the inhabitants, being destitute of all good character in the eyes of each other, will be the subjects of perpetual shame, and the objects of mutual and everlasting contempt. These ingredients of suffering, so terrible even in the present world, will there become the means of inexpressible woe. They will be despised by themselves: they will be despised by each other: they will be objects of abhorrence to God, and to the whole virtuous Universe. The anguish, inflicted by this engine of torture, so completely, in that melancholy world, is often excruciating in this. In how many instances, has the consciousness of contempt, even from a single person, driven its miserable victim to suicide!

Nor is a good name less indispensable *to the attainment of Confidence, and of all the blessings, by which Confidence is followed.* If we are unpossessed of a fair character, no one will confide in us. Without confidence, beside losing the serene and high enjoyment, which it communicates, we shall be prevented from all use-

ful employment, and from all the benefits, which would flow from such employment, to ourselves, and through us to others.

A fair character is also essential *to personal Usefulness.* A man destitute of reputation, is of course destitute of Influence: and virtuous influence is the principal mean of usefulness. The good, which we can individually do, must ever be small: that, which we may influence others to do, can be very great. If we are destitute of this instrument of beneficence, we can never persuade others to unite with us in any valuable purpose; and must on every occasion, however important, stand alone. Our talents are thus in a great measure rendered useless: and our power of contributing to the welfare of our fellow-men, and promoting the cause of righteousness, is shrunk and withered.

In the loss of our reputation also, and in all its miserable consequences; our connexions necessarily partake; particularly our friends, and our families. Whoever wishes well to the sufferer feels the wound. Thus the evils, instead of being suffered by *us* only, are felt by *multitudes;* and often with anguish, not inferior to our own.

Whenever the persons, whose character is thus injured, are in public stations, or are otherwise possessed of superior consequence; the mischief becomes more extensive, and more important. Thus a slander, directed against a Minister of the Gospel, is a wound to the Church: a calumny, branded upon a Magistrate of distinction, is felt by the whole community.

Finally. The loss of reputation, both in itself, and especially in its consequences; the prevention of confidence, employment, and usefulness; *brings with it a multitude of temptations, and prepares the mind for a ready perpetration of sin, in every form, and extending to every degree.* Regard to character is a powerful motive to every species of good conduct; and, when duly felt, is an Evangelical motive. *Whatsoever things are honest, lovely, and of good report, St. Paul* enjoins upon christians as their duty. *A Bishop,* also, the same Apostle teaches us, *must have a good report of them, who are without* the Church, as one indispensable qualification for his election to the Ministry of the Gospel. Those, who were without the Church, when this was written, were *Jews,* and *Heathen.* Yet, even among these men, a bishop was required to sustain an unblemished reputation. Danger to character is, also, a prime restraint from all open wickedness, a restraint, felt by every decent man every day of his life. He who is unconscious of it, has already become almost desperate. He, who discovers, that he disregards it, will be pronounced by his fellow-men abandoned.

In accordance with these observations, the Scriptures have solemnly guarded personal reputation in various ways. They have taught the high value of a good name; declared the guilt, and odiousness, of slander, and tale-bearing; prohibited, strongly, the practice of these crimes; and threatened the perpetrators

with exemplary punishment. Municipal Law, also, has hedged the private character of every man with a strong enclosure; and denounced against every trespasser heavy penalties.

From these considerations it is manifest, that the mischiefs, involved in the loss of reputation, are to individuals incomprehensibly great. Rarely does the thief, or the cheat, rob his fellowmen of *great riches*. The slanderer, therefore, accomplishes a greater injury than either of these villains; for *a good name is better than great riches*. It is of no consequence whether his efforts succeed, or not. The thief is not the less a thief, because he drops his booty; nor the cheat the less a cheat, because he is detected in his fraud. If then the slanderer is not more despised and abhorred, than either; it is because reputation is not esteemed according to its value.

2. *The Public Evils of Slander are too numerous to permit, and too obvious to need, a discussion in this place.*

I have already remarked, that, when persons of consequence are attacked by calumny, the mischief is extensively spread. The slandering of private individuals is capable, also, of extending far, and of harassing not a little, the peace of society. There is, in many places, a kind of indulgence, often given to that pestilential class of mankind, the retailers of private history. In villages, precluded by their size, or their situation, from being theatres of public news, a strong propensity is often discovered to listen to those who employ their time in prying into the private concerns of their neighbours. Encouraged by this kind of approbation, as well as urged onward by restless curiosity, and an eager spirit of meddling, persons of this description multiply without number their suspicions, their innuendoes, their predictions of evil, and their tales of mischief. Speedily, jealousies are excited between neighbour and neighbour, between friend and friend. Speedily the offices of good-will, and good neighbourhood, are withdrawn. Social visits are interdicted. Kindness, both in opinion and in conduct, ceases: and a village, in which peace and good order have long prevailed, is thrown into an uproar. The general conversation is made up of ridicule, invective, and threatening; and a quiet life gives place to quarrels and litigations. Even in the House of God, the inhabitants find themselves scarcely able to unite with each other in the worship of their Maker.

But the spirit of Slander is not confined to villages, nor towns, nor cities. It often flies at higher objects; and boldly intrudes upon the Hall of Justice, the Senate-House, and the chair of State. No life is too spotless; no character is too sacred; to be assaulted, and destroyed, by this evil genius of man. A single calumny, especially in seasons of violent party, has set a nation in a flame; and for a season consumed its peace, and wasted its prosperity. The evils, suffered in this case, are numberless, and incomprehensible. One of the chief sources of the unprecedented crimes,

and sufferings, attendant upon the French Revolution, was the slander of distinguished men, both in public and private life. Misrepresentation and obloquy have been more fatal enemies to the cause of Christianity, than the faggot and the rack.

IV. *Among the dissuasives from this sin I shall briefly suggest the following.*

1. *It is eminently odious in the sight of God.*

The great body of slanderers are liars; and are, therefore, chargeable with all the gross wickedness, attributed to men of this character, and exposed to all the awful threatenings, denounced against them, in the Scriptures. *Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour*, says *David*, under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, directing his duty as the Ruler of *Israel*, *him will I cut off*. In that kingdom, therefore, this crime was made capital by a divine decision. The slanderer, also, and that, when he is not, as well as when he is, the inventer of a false calumny, is, in the 15th Psalm, excluded from the favourable presence of God. *Lord*, saith the Psalmist, *Who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill?* One answer to this inquiry is the following. *He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.*

2. *Every person guilty of this sin, exposes himself, also, to the hatred, and contempt of mankind.*

A slanderer is a common enemy. All considerate persons know, and feel this truth; and guard themselves with watchful care against his attacks. So far as their circumstances will permit, they shun, and warn their children and friends to shun, his company. Not mere suspicion, but a well-founded and deeply-felt conviction, of his hostility to the common interests of men, meets him, wherever he goes. His presence creates only pain. His tongue is a blast upon human comfort; and his name is an additional spot upon the human character.

No member of this audience, I presume, feels, that he is prepared to encounter an evil of this magnitude. It is a terrible consideration, that mankind are less afraid to offend their God, than to provoke the resentment of their fellow-men. Still, it furnishes some consolation, that the dread of public odium, and contempt, is a powerful hindrance of open iniquity, and a forcible restraint upon evil dispositions. If any individual, present, feels adventurous enough to hazard this evil, or is indifferent about it; let him recollect with what agitation he has sustained even slight attacks upon his character; how tremblingly apprehensive he has been, lest a few, or even one, of those around him should believe the calumny, and lest he should be regarded with hatred and contempt, on a speck of earth, and by a handful of mankind. If he could not sustain this shock; how unprepared must he be to meet the common assault of the human race! How must he shrink, and falter, and fall, when indignation burns against him in every breast;

contempt flashes on him from every eye; and a sentence of final condemnation is pronounced on him by every tongue! How will he bear to be shunned by all decent society; pointed at by the finger of prudence, as well as of scorn; and hissed, wherever he appears, not by vulgarity, ill-nature, and enmity, only, but by decency, delicacy, and common sense! How will he bear to spend his days in a kind of solitude, in the midst of mankind; to be welcomed cordially to no man's bosom; to be regarded as a public nuisance; to be suspected, and dreaded; and to have his presence regarded as a burden, and his character as a brand, upon the human race! Especially, how will he bear all this, and feel at the same time, that in all this no injustice is done to him; since he has merited it all by his own vile and infamous conduct!

3. *The immense mischiefs occasioned by Slander ought to deter every man who has not, and to stop every man who has, entered upon this guilty career.*

There are persons to whom I should scarcely think of addressing this consideration. But to this audience it may surely be addressed with success. It cannot for a moment be admitted, even with decency, that those, who are before me, can be indifferent to the thought of doing such mischiefs to their fellow-men. Think what it will be to stab the character, to destroy the peace and the usefulness, even of one of your fellow-creatures. Remember, how tenderly you regard your own reputation; how deeply you have been pierced even by the darts of ridicule; how suddenly you have shrunk from the eye of scorn; and how you have trembled under a tale of slander, or a foul aspersion. Remember, that others have their feelings also. Remember, that reputation is to *them* as dear; calumny as unwelcome; contempt as oppressive; and disgrace as full of anguish; as to *you*. Then ask yourselves, whether you can consent to be the authors of these evils.

All this, however, is only the first stage of the mischiefs, which you will accomplish. Extend your views from individuals to families. How much happiness in these little, delightful circles, is often destroyed by a single calumnious tale! How often are the hearts of parents broken, and the peace of their children destroyed, by false imputations of dishonesty to a son, or impurity to a daughter! How often is the domestic group clustered together with terror and anguish, by false charges upon the good name of the parent! Before, they were happy. Why are they not happy now? Because a fiend, in the shape, and with the tongue, of a man, has blasted all their enjoyments.

But the mischiefs do not stop here. Families are set at variance with each other: friends are converted into enemies; and neighbours into strangers. Harmony, hospitality, and peace, sicken, and die, before the foul breath of slander. Every office of kindness is interrupted; and the spirit of Christianity itself amazed, sor-

plexed, bewildered, looks around in vain, or almost in vain, to find proper objects of its beneficence, and means, and modes, of administering it with success. To the happiness of good neighbourhood, succeeds a train of grovelling, base, serpentine hostilities: depraving all who practice them, and distressing all against whom they are practised. Anxiety and dismay haunts every fireside; and a funeral gloom settles upon every prospect, and broods over every hope.

4. *The Slanderer ought to be deterred from his purpose by the incalculable mischiefs, which he will do to himself.*

It cannot be supposed, that in such a course of hostilities against his fellow-men, the Slanderer will escape from the common resentment of those whom he has injured. As he is an enemy to all men; all men become at length enemies to him. Such as have smarted severely from his tongue, will usually take effectual care to make him smart in his turn. The vengeance, executed upon him, will often be exemplary. Sometimes he will be chastised. Sometimes he will be prosecuted. Sometimes he will be excluded from all decent society: and often, if not always, he will be openly insulted with indignities, which he knows not how to brook, and yet dares not resist. The consciouness of his guilt will make him a coward: while a painful conviction, that his sufferings are a mere and just retribution of his crimes, will point every sting, and give a double force to every blow.

Still more ought he to be alarmed at the certain prospect of depraving himself. Slander is a compound of falsehood, injustice, unkindness, and meanness; forming in itself a character eminently depraved. What is so unhappily begun, proceeds with a rapid and dreadful declension. All the designs, which he forms in the indulgence of this characteristical propensity; all the measures, which he feels obliged to employ; all the instruments, which he can summon to his assistance; all the gratification, which he can experience in his success; are such, and such only, as contribute to shrink, debase, and pollute his mind. In such a soil, a noble, generous thought would instantly wither. To such a bosom, honourable friendship cannot approach. At the door of such a heart, Christianity knocks for admittance in vain. His career is the career of abandonment only, through a path of steep and rapid descent, *going down to the chambers of death.*

SERMON CXXIX.

TENTH COMMANDMENT.—CONTENTMENT.

EXODUS XX. 17.—*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.*

THE preceding Precepts of the Decalogue, so far as the language in which they are written is concerned, are apparently intended to regulate, chiefly, the *external* conduct of mankind. Had they not been explained by the Prophets, who followed *Moses*, and still more by our Saviour and his Apostles, plausible reasons might be alleged, why all of them, even the fourth, might be satisfied by external observances. But the Precept in the Text is directed immediately, and only, *to the heart;* and is intended supremely to control the disposition. The propensity, forbidden in it, is *Covetousness:* an inordinate desire of worldly enjoyments; and, particularly, an inordinate desire of such enjoyments, when in the possession of others. We may lawfully desire the enjoyments furnished by this world; and that, even when they belong to our fellow-men; if the desire is confined within due bounds. We may desire, lawfully, the lands and houses of others, when *they* are willing to part with them, and *we* are equally willing to purchase them at an equitable price. We may lawfully wish to obtain any share of worldly good, with which God may crown our honest and industrious efforts, and which we may be prepared to enjoy with a spirit of gratitude, beneficence, and moderation. *I know*, says *Solomon*, *that there is no good in them*, (that is, in the creatures which God has made in this world, or the things created here) *but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life; and also, that every man should eat, and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour: it is the gift of God.*

An inordinate Desire of Natural good, seems, in the order of things, to be the Commencement of sin in a virtuous being. Our first parents began their apostacy by coveting the forbidden fruit as an enjoyment, and wishing to become *as gods, knowing good and evil.* In this disposition seem naturally to be involved, Ambition, Avarice, and Voluptuous wishes for its attainment: and out of it to spring, as consequences, Pride, Vanity, and criminal Sensuality, in its enjoyment; Envy towards those, who possess more of it than ourselves; Anger and Malice towards those, who hinder us from acquiring it; Revenge towards those, who have deprived us of it;

Falsehood, as the means of achieving and securing it; Forgetfulness, and therefore Ingratitude, with respect to such as give it; and Impiety, and consequent Rebellion, Repining, and Profaneness, towards Him, from whom we receive less of it, than our unreasonable wishes demand. In a word, to this disposition may be traced, with no great difficulty, most, if not all, of the sins, committed by mankind. The Text, therefore, appears to be levelled at the root of bitterness; at a sinful disposition in its original form, and in the very commencement of its existence. If we obey this Precept with the heart; and it cannot otherwise be obeyed; that Obedience will immediately fulfil all the demands of the other Precepts, belonging to the second table, or those, regulating our duty to mankind; and, consequentially, will fulfil those of the first. The Tenth Command, therefore, may be regarded as, in an extensive sense, a Summary of our duty.

This Command directly prohibits *Coveting;* or, in other words, *Ambition*, *Avarice*, and *Voluptuous Desires*. Of course, it requires, universally, *Contentment*, and by easy implication, Charity. Of consequence, also, it forbids *Discontentment* and *Envy*. *Contentment*, the Virtue required in this Precept, shall be the principal subject of the present discourse. With this subject, I shall connect some observations concerning *Discontentment and Envy*. Concerning *Voluptuous desires* I shall not, here, enter into any discussion.

In examining this subject I shall

I. *Describe the Nature;* and,

II. *Mention the Benefits; of Contentment.*

The *Nature* of Contentment has been very often misapprehended. Persons often suppose themselves to be contented, when they are merely *gay*, or *glad;* when a native, or accidental, sprightliness of mind excludes sorrow and gloom; or when a multiplicity of enjoyments, the gratification of a darling wish, or the success of a favourite enterprize, or the arrival of some unexpected benefit, fills the heart with pleasure. Others mistake *Indifference* and *Phlegm* for Contentment: and others, still, that kind of *dull Equanimity*, which springs from uniform, grave, and spiritless, employments; destroying all the elasticity of the mind, and settling it down in an immoveable stagnation. The Contentment, which is the object of this Precept, differs radically from all these dispositions. A man may be gay, or glad; and yet be totally destitute of this virtue. His natural disposition may incline him to flutter from one amusement to another, without suffering him to settle seriously upon any. Still, the disposition, which he mistakes for Contentment, is only Sportiveness. But no man will mistrust that sportiveness is the disposition required by this Precept. A man may be greatly delighted with his present enjoyments. But no person, beside himself, will mistake his pleasure for Contentment: and a reverse of fortune may convince even him, that there is a

wide difference between these two states of mind. Much less can the other attributes, which I have mentioned, lay a claim to this title. There is nothing excellent, nor amiable, in being merely grave, insensible to sufferings, or indifferent about them.

The *Words, used in the Scriptures to denote Contentment, involve*, as one of their significations, the *restraining of ourselves;* and, as another, *the supporting of such burdens, as are incumbent on us.* It includes, therefore, the supposition, that the contented person is placed in circumstances, which demand the restraint of his inclinations, and the sustentation of difficulties. Such, plainly, are the circumstances of every being, who can, with strict propriety, be said to be contented. To say, *that an Angel was contented*, would certainly be incorrect phraseology. *An Angel is happy;* all his circumstances being completely gratifying to his desires. *A man*, whom many troubles befal, and many burdens press, *may*, by steadily restraining his inclinations to murmur at the former, and serenely supporting the latter, *be contented.* Such is always the situation of man, upon the whole. He is never, for any length of time, in a situation entirely agreeable to him. On the contrary, he is always required, in some degree, and at short intervals, to suffer. If he possess a contented spirit, he will suffer with quietness and serenity.

Having premised these general remarks, I observe, that *Evangelical Contentment*, the object of the Command in the Text, *involves*,

1. *A fixed belief of the Reality, and Excellency, of the Divine Government.*

The Divine Government is, throughout the Scriptures, made the foundation of every delightful, and even every comfortable, thought. This Scheme is perfectly accordant with the dictates of Reason. Both the views, and prospects, of the Atheist, as I have heretofore shown at large,* are gloomy and desolate, full of perplexity and discouragement, and destitute alike of comfort and hope. *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice:* is a declaration, and a precept founded on it, which a very limited understanding will show us to be just; and a very moderate degree of rectitude incline us to obey.

It is not, however, sufficient to insure our obedience, however well disposed, that we believe in the superintendence of *some* All-controlling Agent. It is the Government of Jehovah, in which we are required to rejoice; the result of the Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, which constitute the Perfect Character of this glorious Being. No man can be contented, who does not believe, that the administration, by which all his own interests, both personal and social, are ultimately to be decided, is both just and benevolent. The state of things, with which we are immediately concerned, is

* See Sermon III.

mysterious and distressing. The mysteries we cannot unravel: the distresses we often find it difficult to bear. Both, united, must frequently be insupportable, unless we could confide in the Wisdom and Goodness of Him, who controls the Universe, as furnishing sufficient assurance, that they are right and good in themselves, and will in the end be shown to be right and good. The reality, and excellence, of the Divine Government, therefore, must indispensably be objects of a steady faith to a contented mind.

2. *Contentment involves a humble Hope, generally existing, that We are interested in the Divine Favour.*

We suffer many evils in the present world. Philosophy bids us suffer them with firmness; since they cannot be avoided; and since impatience and sinking under them will only make them heavier. I am not disposed to deny the prudence, or even the propriety, of this precept. It may be, it usually is, true, that we lessen the degree of our sufferings by resolving firmly to endure them. But it is equally true, that the immoveable nature of evils is no cause of Contentment. On the contrary, it is always the most distressing consideration, which can attend them. This, however, is the only support, which Philosophy can give to the sufferer.

No motive can rationally make us willing to suffer. There is no virtue in suffering evil for its own sake. All rational submission to evil arises from the consideration, that God wills us to suffer, as the proper reward of our sins, and as the means of promoting his Glory, and the good of ourselves or others; of others alway, and of ourselves, if we do not prevent it by our disobedience to his pleasure. This motive to Contentment, Christianity holds out to its disciples, invariably, by pointing their attention, and their faith, to the government of God. The hope of an interest in his favour, Christianity, also, regularly inspires, by presenting to them all the promises of infinite Mercy through the Mediation of Christ. Without such a hope, the ills of life would often overcome the equanimity of such minds, as ours. The outcast would be feebly supported by an assurance, that he could obtain no relief for his sufferings; and the martyr, by being told, that his flames could not be extinguished. In the hope of the divine mercy, a remedy is found for every present evil; and he, who exercises it, will naturally summon all his powers to sustain, with serenity, distresses, which, although grievous for the present, will operate as the means, and terminate in the enjoyment, of everlasting good.

3. *Contentment involves a Conviction, that it is both our Duty, and our Interest, to acquiesce in the divine dispensations.*

With the dispositions, already mentioned, it may be regarded as a thing of course, that such a conviction will prevail in the mind. If God is the universal Ruler; if his government is the result of infinite excellence; if what he does, or permits to be done, is right in itself, and will hereafter appear to be right; if we are furnished with a humble hope of an interest in his favour; then, however

mysterious and perplexing the events of Divine Providence may be, and however distressing to *us*, we still shall see, and feel, abundant reason to be satisfied. We shall readily admit, that the most untoward events, the most difficult to be reconciled with our apprehensions of wisdom and goodness, are difficult only in the view of creatures whose minds are limited, like ours. We shall believe, that they are perplexing, only because we cannot explain them; that they seem wrong, only because we cannot understand them. With such views, we shall cheerfully resign the Government of the Universe into the hands of its Maker, and wait for the removal of our own perplexities, until the day when *the mystery shall be finished*, when God shall appear just in judging, and clear even in condemning.

4. *Contentment implies a Cordial Acknowledgment, that we are unworthy of the mercies which we receive.*

There are in the present world many afflictions. If we are guiltless beings; our sufferance of them must be unmerited; and the communication of them to us by our Creator is irreconcileable with all our ideas of equity. If we admit God to be just; we are obliged also to admit, that ourselves are sinners. If we are not sinners, but are unjustly distressed; there is no reason, why we should be contented with our situation. No being can be bound to be contented with injustice. But if we are sinners; we can have no claim to any favour. If we are conscious, that we are sinners; we shall see, that we have no such claim. We shall see, that, however small our blessings may appear, God *hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Enjoyments, in the view of a mind thus attempered, will all appear to be mere gifts of Sovereign Goodness, mere emanations of benevolence, to a being, destitute of any claim to the favour of God. Without such views, seated in the heart, and controlling its affections, it appears to me impossible, that such a being, as a man, should be contented.

5. *Contentment involves a disposition steadily to mark the daily mercies of God.*

The great body of mankind seem to regard their enjoyments either as things of course; or as acquisitions, made by their own ingenuity, and efforts. With such views it seems impossible, that they should consider them as blessings. Their afflictions, on the contrary, they appear to consider as mere hardships; partly as injuries, done to them by their fellow-men, and partly as vexatious and unlucky events, brought upon them by, they know not what, untoward chance, or evil destiny. Accordingly, in their hours of complaining, they customarily pronounce themselves to be ill-starred; unlucky; unfortunate; persecuted by ill-fortune; plagued; and harassed; and, what is very remarkable, never speak of themselves as chastised or afflicted by God. According to their own account, their enjoyments are accidents, and acquisitions; not

blessings: and their sufferings are calamities; not judgments of God.

Multitudes also, who do not go all this length, suffer the mercies, which they daily receive, and these both invaluable and numberless, to pass by them in a great measure unregarded. Converse with these men on this subject; and they will readily acknowledge, that all their enjoyments are gifts of God, and in no sense merited by themselves. Still, from their ordinary conversation, and conduct, it is evident, that such acknowledgments are no part of the current state of their minds. From their obvious indifference, from their regardless inattention, amid the common and most necessary blessings of life, it is undeniably certain, that they are scarcely conscious even of the existence, much less of the Source, of these blessings. Were these persons to number their enjoyments; they would be astonished to find their amount. Were they to estimate them; they would be equally astonished to perceive their value. Were they to examine their own character; they would be amazed, that blessings of such value, and of such an amount, were bestowed on themselves.

The man, who actually adopts this conduct, will soon discern in the importance, and number, of his enjoyments, and in his own undeserving character, ample reasons, not only for being satisfied, but also for being grateful. On the one hand, he will admire that Divine Goodness, which is manifested to him every hour in so many forms; and will wonder, on the other, that it should be manifested to so guilty and undeserving a creature. So long as we do not perceive these facts; and, unless we mark them, we shall not perceive them; it seems impossible, that we should possess a contented spirit.

6. *Contentment involves the Moderation of those desires, which are directed to worldly enjoyments.*

There are two modes, in which mankind seek happiness: *Indulging their wishes, and seeking to find objects, sufficient in their nature and number to gratify them; and confining their wishes by choice, and system, to a moderate number of objects, and thus preparing themselves to find their enjoyment in such objects, as, in the ordinary course of things, they may rationally expect to obtain.* The former of these modes is generally pursued by mankind. Still, it is palpably unwise; full of danger; and regularly attended by disappointment, mortification, and distress. Every man, who adopts it, will be compelled to learn, that the state of this world is altogether unsuited to satisfy numerous and eager desires. The enjoyments, which it furnishes, are comparatively few, and small. They are incapable, therefore, of fulfilling the demands of numerous and extensive desires. At the same time, he will find his desires enlarging incomparably more, and increasing incomparably faster, than their gratification. A rich man covets property with far more greediness than the posses-

sor of moderate wealth. He, who has entered the chase for fame, power, or pleasure, will find his wishes become more vehement, as well as more expanded, by every new instance of success; and will soon perceive, that, what he once thought to be sufficient good, has ceased to be good at all. If he gains all that he pursues; he will, therefore, be continually less and less satisfied; and, while *he snatches on the right hand, and devours on the left*, he will still *be hungry* in the midst of his gluttony and plunder.

Incomparably more wise, and hopeful, is the latter of these modes. The wishes, which are directed to worldly enjoyments, can be controlled, to an indefinite degree, by reason, firmness, and regular pre-concertion. In this case, the mind, demanding only moderate enjoyments, may ordinarily be in a good measure satisfied: for, moderate enjoyments not only exist in our present state, but are commonly attainable, without much difficulty, by the great body of mankind. Our wishes, in this case, are suited to our circumstances. As, therefore, our enjoyment is commensurate to the satisfaction of our wishes; so, when our wishes are moderate, the moderate enjoyments, which this world supplies, will furnish us with sufficient gratification.

Without this moderation of our desires, contentment cannot exist. An eager pursuit of earthly good would make an Angel discontented. Vehement desires, ungratified, are sure and copious sources of misery. The demands of enjoyment, in the mind which cherishes them, are too high to be satisfied by any thing, which this world has to give. The mind seeks for enjoyment, not with the spirit of a rational, industrious man, but with that of a miser; and cries unceasingly, "*Give, give;*" but, whatever may be its acquisitions, is never sufficiently satisfied to be able to say, "*It is enough.*"

7. *Contentment involves Self-approbation.*

All enjoyment commences in the state of the mind itself. When that is disturbed, no external gratifications can be relished, or regarded. No seasoning, no daintiness, will enable him, who is languishing under a fever, to relish even the choicest viands. But to ease of mind, self-approbation is indispensable. Unless the Conscience approve, and smile; serenity can never overspread the world within. So long as the Conscience reproaches, wounds, and terrifies; the soul must be perturbed, restless, and unhappy. That Contentment should exist in such a mind, can neither be proper, nor possible. But, whenever the man begins to submit to be controlled by his Conscience, he begins to be approved by himself. The tumult of the soul then begins to subside: the storm ceases to lower, and to threaten: the violence of the blast is hushed: the angry clouds disperse. A summer evening overspreads the soul; calm, serene, bright; the promise of a future, peaceful, and delightful day.

II. *I shall now briefly mention some of the benefits of Contentment.*

1. *This disposition of mind secures to us the Favour of God.*

The preceding Observations make it evident, that Contentment is, in an extensive sense, obedience to the Divine Will. It is also directly, and repeatedly, commanded in the Scriptures. To *Timothy*, *St. Paul* writes, *Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.* To the Hebrews he says, universally, *Be content with such things as ye have.* This injunction he also enforces by the best of all reasons: viz. *that God hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.* That God is pleased with obedience to his commands, needs no illustration. Equally unnecessary would be an attempt to show, that a state of mind, formed, as Contentment obviously is, chiefly of faith, submission, humility, gratitude, and self-government, must be obedience eminently acceptable. But him, whom God approves, He will bless. The promises of the divine favour to such, as cordially obey the divine will, are spread every where throughout the Scriptures; and not one of them will fail of being accomplished. But the favour of God is the sum of all benefits, and the source whence every other proceeds. Contentment begins with a hope of the divine favour; and, as a continued course of obedience to the commands of God, originates unceasingly new hopes, and makes sure of new communications of the same invaluable blessing.

2. *Contentment enables him, who possesses it, to perform his duty with more exactness, and more pleasure, than he can otherwise attain.*

The contented mind is unincumbered by many cares, and many hindrances, which usually obstruct, and retard, men in the performance of their duty. The serenity of its disposition leaves it at full leisure calmly to examine, and therefore clearly to understand, and thoroughly to feel, the nature, direction, and amount, of its duty. Satisfied with the divine dispensations, and assured of the approbation of Him, whose dispensations they are, it is prepared, beforehand, to accord with their tenour, and to perform whatever they may require. In this case, its obedience obviously becomes easy, cheerful, and of course delightful; as well as uniform, and exact. It is the punctilious and cheerful obedience of a *child;* compared with which the occasional and reluctant performances of a discontented man, are merely the mercenary drudgery of an unfaithful *servant.* But to perform our duty with pleasure, is to lead a life of enjoyment: for, our duty returns every moment of our lives. To perform our duty, also, with exactness, is not only delightful in itself; but is a continual source of self-approbation and peace; and the only source, whence these blessings can be derived.

3. *The man, in whom this spirit prevails, is secured from many Temptations and many Sins, to which others are exposed.*

A discontented man naturally indulges, and is always liable to, the sin of murmuring against God, arraigning his Justice, Wisdom, and Goodness, and hardening his heart against his Mercy; because he is impatient under his own allotments, and unwilling to accord with any proposals from a Being, whose Character he disrelishes, and whose Conduct he regards as the source of his troubles. *The envious man* is prompted by his ruling disposition to repine at the blessings of others; to accuse God of partiality in bestowing them; to wish them lessened; to resort not unfrequently to active, insidious, and malignant exertions for the purpose of lessening them; and to exercise a kind of infernal joy, when they are taken away. Such a man turns a gloomy, misanthropic eye on all those, who, he thinks, are richer, greater, wiser, or happier, than himself. From these rebellious and fiend-like dispositions, from the temptations which they create, and the sins to which they lead, the contented mind is delightfully free. Satisfied with its own lot, it feels no anxiety, mortification, or opposition to its Maker, because others are possessed of superior good. Particularly, it is undisturbed by the sight of superior wealth in the possession of others; of superior power, pleasures, reputation, and influence. On all these splendours it can look, as the eagle on the Sun, with a steady and serene eye; and can find its happiness not lessened, but increased, because others are happy. The disposal, both of its own concerns and theirs, it is willing to leave wholly to God; and prepared to enjoy any good, which He is pleased to bestow, whoever may be the recipient. Thus,

4. *It is a disposition eminently Peaceful and Comfortable.*

On the one hand, it is preserved from many troubles, suffered by others; and on the other, finds many pleasures, which others never know. The distress, experienced in an unceasing course of disappointments, by all discontented, covetous, and ambitious men, is chiefly unknown to him, who has acquired this delightful spirit. Equally free is he, also, from the pain of ungratified desires, and from continual fears, that his desires will be ungratified. Nor is he less secure from that complication of wo, which springs incessantly from distrust of the goodness and faithfulness of God; from murmuring against his providence: from reluctance to obey his pleasure; and from the consciousness of not having faithfully obeyed at all. At the same time, he is delivered from those fears of future wo, which so often harass the minds of guilty men.

It is not here intended to insinuate, that the Contented man is free from afflictions: but that he is comparatively free from them, is unquestionable. Contentment will not remove the thorns and briers, spread over this unhappy world by the apostacy; and renew upon its face the bloom, the beauty, and the fragrance, of *Eden*. But it will blunt the point of many a thorn, and convert

many a wilderness into a fruitful field. The sorrows, which it feels, will be all allayed by the remembrance, that they come from the hand of the Infinitely Good; and by the hope that they will all terminate in the promotion of its own best interests. To the blast of calamity, also, it yields, like the willow; and is, therefore, not rooted up and destroyed. In the mean time, whenever troubles arrive, however numerous or great they may be, their distressing efficacy is always allayed by the soothing, balmy, influence of peace and self-approbation.

This delightful influence, also, is regularly diffused over every enjoyment. The enjoyments of the contented man are, in his view, all gifts, and blessings; not acquisitions, made by his own ingenuity and efforts. As gifts, they are relished with gratitude to their Glorious Author. The light, in which they are seen by this grateful disposition, is always glossy and brilliant; and the taste, which they furnish, is singularly sweet. Thus the contented man finds pleasures, where others find only troubles. Thus, when troubles arrest him, their bitterness is allayed: and thus all the pleasures, which he finds, are enhanced by his own happy disposition. Even in seasons, when darkness overspreads the world; and such seasons, it must be acknowledged, there are; when the gloom overshadows *his* mind, as well as the minds of *those around him;* and when the face of the Sun of Righteousness is eclipsed, to the eyes of mankind; hope, humble and serene, will lift up her exploring eye, and behold the divine luminary still visible, and environing the intervening darkness with a circle of Glory.

5. *Contentment renders its possessor eminently Pleasing and Comfortable to others.*

Uniform serenity, cheerfulness, and sweetness of disposition, constitute that character in man, which to his fellow-men is more agreeable than any other. Religion itself, however pious and benevolent the mind may be, is despoiled, if sensibly destitute of this disposition, of its peculiar burnish and beauty. It will indeed be approved, and esteemed. But it will not be entirely relished. Gravity, existing beyond a certain degree, may render it forbidding. Reserve may render it suspicious; and a sorrowful, melancholy aspect may excite a sympathy, so painful, as to make it unwelcome. But a sweet, serene, and cheerful, temper is the object, not only of esteem, but of delight. The presence of a person, who manifests this temper, is universally coveted; and diffuses a kind of lustre over every circle. He is accordingly welcomed to every house, and to every company. Even men, destitute of Religion, will strongly relish his company; and will never mention his character without pointed commendation.

Beside the immediate, and extensive, pleasure, which such a person communicates to those with whom he converses, this dis-

position recommends his opinions, his rules of life, his various conduct, and the several plans, which he proposes for the benefit of mankind. Multitudes will embark with readiness and ardour in the promotion of purposes, which he recommends; because they are recommended by *him;* because they think favourably of whatever he proposes, and love to unite with him in any pursuit. Thus, this spirit, beside rendering him eminently agreeable to others, gives him an influence with mankind, which he could not otherwise possess; and in the happiest manner increases his power to do good. It deserves particular consideration, that some of the most popular men, who have ever lived in this country, have not been distinguished for brilliancy of genius, extensiveness of views, or profoundness of research; but, while they possessed respectable talents, were remarkably distinguished by the disposition, which I have here described.

Of this disposition, Contentment is the uniform, and the only efficacious, source. By a discontented man, it can be assumed only by effort, and for a moment; and must speedily, and characteristically, give way to the uneasy, fretful spirit, which has taken possession of his mind. There is, indeed, a native good humour, which is pleasant to the possessor, and very agreeable to those with whom he converses. But this desirable disposition, although possessing many advantages, is radically defective, because it is a mere propensity, and not a moral principle. Too frail to sustain the rude shocks, or the long-continued pressure, of adversity, it is prone to give way in seasons of severe trial; and is incapable of the serene and steady endurance, so characteristical of a contented mind. Such a mind may bend; but, while life lasts, it will not break. Where native good humour would shrink, and fly, from the conflict, on innumerable occasions; the Contented mind will firmly brave the danger; sustain the assault; and, with a cool, noiseless, unruffled energy, in the end, overcome. At the same time, such a mind will always find at hand a Divine Auxiliary, an Almighty Friend, ever present, ever watchful, ever extending his arm to protect, strengthen, and give the victory. This indispensable aid, native good humour cannot claim. All its ultimate reliance is fixed on this world. Its eye is never lifted upward; but fastens on earth, and time, for all its resources. Contentment, on the contrary, while she finds more sweetness in earthly enjoyment than good humour can ever find, and far more effectually lightens the pressure of calamity by the assistance, which this world presents, fixes her eye on the Heavens for superior aid; and sees the thickest darkness of suffering, and even of death, delightfully illumined by beams of Glory, shining from beyond the grave!

SERMON CXXX.

TENTH COMMANDMENT.—CHARITY.

1 Timothy vi. 17—19.—*Charge them that are rich in this world—that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*

THERE are, as I have heretofore observed, two attributes of the human mind, in the indulgence of which, we especially disobey the Tenth Command, viz. Ambition and Avarice. Contentment is opposed to both, particularly to the former. What in modern times is called *Charity*, that is, a disposition cheerfully to impart our property, and kind offices to the poor, and suffering, is especially opposed to the latter. Of course, it naturally becomes the next subject of our consideration, in our progress.

In examining it, I propose briefly to point out,

I. *The Nature of this duty;*

II. *The Persons, to whom;* and,

III. *The Manner, in which, it is to be performed;* and,

IV. *The Motives to the performance.*

I. *I will endeavour to explain the Nature of this duty.*

It has been already mentioned as a general definition of Charity, as an attribute of the human mind, that it is a disposition cheerfully to impart our property, and our kind offices, to the poor and suffering. But we are not to suppose that every cheerful communication of these benefits to persons of this description, merits the name of Charity in the evangelical sense.

Persons often aid the suffering merely from ostentation. These will not be suspected of Charity.

Others do the same thing merely to free themselves from the importunate applications of those, by whom it is solicited. This will not be mistaken for Charity.

Some, and those not a few, impart their property to the distressed, because they place little value upon property. Neither will this be soberly considered as charitable conduct.

Some perform charitable acts to free themselves from those reproaches of conscience, which they are assured will follow the refusal of such acts.

Multitudes perform offices of this nature from the hope of acquiring the esteem of others, and the various benefits which it is expected to confer.

Other multitudes extend relief to sufferers from a native spirit of generosity. This is amiable; but is not even an intentional

performance of any duty, and can therefore possess no evangelical character.

Others still do the same things, under the influence of constitutional compassion, or native tenderness. This also is amiable, but for the same reason does not partake of an evangelical nature.

Some perform actions of this class, because they have been taught and habituated in early life to perform them as a duty. Though they merit and obtain the esteem of those around them, yet they never with the heart, or in the evangelical sense, perform any duty.

Others do works of this nature, because they have been accustomed to commend them highly, and are thus compelled to charitable exertions, for the sake of maintaining consistency of character.

Finally; Not a small number pursue a charitable course of life, because they think actions of this nature the sum and substance of religion, and expect by them to recommend themselves to the favour of God, and to obtain the blessings of a happy immortality These men, whether aware of it or not, are intending to purchase heaven by paying the price, which they suppose to be set upon it in the Gospel.

It must undoubtedly be admitted, that, in several of these cases, that which is actually done, is done cheerfully, and that property and kind offices are really imparted to the distressed; yet in none of them, at least in my opinion, is there any degree of evangelical charity.

Charity, in the evangelical sense, is no other than the Beneficence required by the Gospel, administered, with the disposition which it requires, to a particular class of mankind, viz. those who are, or without this administration, would be, in circumstances of distress. The disposition, which is here intended, is that Love which is the fulfilling of the law, the genuine source of every other duty.

If this account of the subject be admitted, it must also be conceded, that all acts of real charity are performed from a sense of duty, and with an intention to obey God in the performance, and that this is indispensable to its very existence. It cannot therefore be the result of native tenderness or compassion. No virtue is in the proper sense an exercise of any human passion. Virtue, in all instances, is *the energy of the mind directed to that which is right*, or, in other words, agreeable to the will of God and conducive to the good of the universe, *because it is believed to be of this nature*. The native affections of the mind are in several instances amiable, and often contribute to enhance and adorn the real exercise of virtue; but in themselves they are never, in the evangelical sense, virtuous. That which is done without any sense of duty, and without an intention to perform a duty, can never sustain the character of virtue.

Further; It is plain, if the above observations be admitted, that Charity, in the sense of the Gospel, is disinterested. The design, in every act which is entitled to this name, is to do real good to those who are its objects. The intention of the author of it will invariably be to promote the happiness, or to relieve the distresses of the sufferer; not to advance his own reputation, to promote his own selfish purposes, nor even to prevent the reproaches of his own conscience. In a word, Selfishness, of whatever kind, and in whatever form it may exist, is not Charity.

In addition to these things, it may be observed, that evangelical charity demands, essentially, that we take delight in doing the good which is to be done. *It is more blessed;* in the original, *it is more happy; to give than to receive;* that is, It is an employment, a character, attended of course with a higher degree of happiness: or to declare the same truth in a more universal form; *It is a happier state to communicate good to others, than to gain it from their hands.* He, who does not find some degree of this happiness in bestowing alms and other kindnesses upon his suffering fellow-creatures, has not yet begun to be charitable.

II. *The Persons to whom these offices of kindness are to be performed, are various.*

These are, universally, such as already suffer, or have become liable to, some distress; to relieve or prevent which, the kind offices included under the name of charity, are necessary. It will readily occur, that, within this broad description, there must be not only many persons, but many classes of persons, differing very materially in their character and circumstances, and having therefore very different claims upon the kind offices of their fellow-men. Among these are found all gradations of character and of suffering.

The class, which first obtrudes itself upon the eye, is that of the common wandering Beggars; seen in every country, and particularly in the streets of every city. There are not wanting persons, and those of a fair reputation, who hold that alms ought not to be given to this miserable class of mankind. In their view, charity administered to them answers scarcely any other purpose than to encourage idleness, intemperance, and other vices to which these degraded beings are so generally addicted. Whatever is done for them, it is observed, is ordinarily useless, and worse than useless to themselves; and might always be bestowed on more deserving objects, and with happier effects. That, to a great extent, these observations are just, cannot be questioned. But it may be questioned, whether they are capable of so universal an application. Some of these persons, and the number is not small, are unable to labour; and are yet without friends or home. To wander, seemr necessary for the preservation of their health, and even of theis lives. It is not true of all of them, that they are vicious, nor that vice has been the means of reducing them to their present suffer-

ings. I know of no evangelical principle, which warrants us to leave them to perish, or to refuse the proper means of alleviating their distresses.

We commanded you, says St Paul to the Thessalonians, *that if any would not work, neither should he eat*. But it will not be supposed, that the Apostle intended to include in this prohibition those who are unable to work, many of whom are found in this class of the indigent. To these, subsistence, comforts, medicines, and whatever kind offices are necessary, cannot be denied. Were no person suffered to wander in this manner, but such as I have described, probably objections never would have been started against admitting them within the pale of charity.

As to the really idle and vicious members, of which almost the whole of this class is apparently composed, it is in my opinion the duty of every government to force them, by every vindicable and necessary measure, to labour for their own subsistence.

Individuals are often unable to distinguish among the wandering applicants for charity, which are proper objects of their bounty. In this uncertainty, it seems to be a good rule to relieve the distresses occasioned by hunger and nakedness, whenever we cannot satisfactorily prove imposition on the part of the applicant. Money is given to such persons, when given at all, without answering any valuable end.

Concerning the administration of charity to sufferers of every other description, there will be no dispute.

Among these, those whom Providence has stationed in our own neighbourhood seem, in ordinary cases, to have superior claims for relief upon us for three reasons; viz. that it is in our power to do them more good than we can do to others, because they are within our reach; that the poor who are at a distance from us will find other benefactors in their vicinity; and that, if we do not take a charitable care of those who surround us, they will ordinarily be without relief. It may be generally said, that Providence has placed them under our eye for the very purpose of awakening our beneficence towards them; and has thus, in a manner which may be called *express*, required this service at our hands.

A distinction ought to be made among these, on the score of that modesty which prevents some of them from soliciting benefactions, and even from making known their sufferings; on account of the industry and faithfulness, with which some of them labour, amid many discouragements, to supply their own wants; as well as with regard to the uprightness of their dispositions and the blamelessness of their lives. All these are obvious recommendations to evangelical charity. We are to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, *but especially to them who are of the household of faith*. The poor and suffering, who belong to this household, have the first of all claims to the good which we are able to do. To relieve the distresses of these men, when the relief springs

from the spirit of the Gospel, is conduct so excellent, that as Christ has expressly informed us, he will remember and distinguish it at the final day, and will regard the charity as being administered to Himself.

Universally, the better the character of the sufferer, the higher will be his claims upon us for our beneficence.

III. *I will now endeavour to point out the Manner in which this duty should be performed.*

Concerning this subject I observe,

1. *Our beneficence should obviously be such as to answer the end which is proposed.*

The sufferings of this world are almost endlessly diversified. The modes of administering charity ought plainly to be varied, so as to suit the varieties of distress. A large proportion of the evils of life arise from want. The communication of property, in some degree, and form, or other, is the proper means of removing those which belong to this class. Others are derived from sickness, pain, disgrace, the loss of friends, the want of friends, the want of encouragement in the business of life; often from the fact that we are strangers; often from unkindness, contempt, and contumely, often from ignorance, want of advice; and from very many other sources. There are also distresses merely of a moral nature, such as spring from unhappy errors concerning the doctrines and duties of religion, from ignorance of the way of salvation, from spiritual prejudices, from stupidity, from temptations, and universally from sin in all its forms and degrees. Now it is evident, that very different modes of relief must be applied to these numerous and diversified cases of suffering. That mode only is of any value, which is fitted to accomplish the end. To employ ourselves in giving grave advice to a person famishing with hunger, would be not merely idle, but ludicrous; and to offer food to a person labouring under the pangs of a broken heart, would be a specimen of folly equally contemptible.

2. *Our charity should be administered in such a degree as actually to accomplish the end.*

It is not enough to mitigate a calamity, when it is in our power to remove it; to assuage a disease, when we are able to complete the cure; to give advice or consolation to a youth whose spirits are sinking for want of employment, when it is in our power to put him into useful business; to pity a backsliding Christian, when we are able to restore him to his duty, to pray for the conversion of the heathen, when we can send them the Word of God and missionaries to preach it. Particularly, it is never enough to expend our benevolence to the distressed in talking, however wisely, however affectionately, however evangelically, concerning their sufferings and the proper means of relieving them; or in breathing sighs, or shedding tears, or uttering good wishes over their distresses. *If a brother or sister be naked, or destitute of daily food, and one of*

you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding, ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Nothing is more absurd, nothing is more contemptible, than the charity which evaporates in words and wishes.

3. *It is our duty, so far as it is in our power, to relieve greater distresses in preference to those which are small.*

The smaller sufferings of those around us, are by no means to be neglected; and they have this recommendation to our particular attention, that we can almost always relieve them, when such as are greater may demand efforts beyond the limits of our ability. When this is not the case, a greater suffering prefers a proportionally stronger claim to our charitable exertions.

4. *When we have objects of charity in our neighbourhood for whose relief we propose to contribute with regularity, it is ordinarily better to furnish them with a Considerable Sum at once, than to communicate to them the same aid in a number of smaller sums.*

Small sums are not only of little value in reality; but are usually regarded, especially by persons of this class, as being still less valuable. Improvidence is almost always a prominent feature in the character of those, who permanently need charity. They neither have a just sense of the value of property, nor just apprehensions of the modes in which it may be laid out in the best manner. Little sums will in their view be incapable of answering any important purpose; and they rarely think of hoarding them, until the accumulation shall become considerable. They will therefore, usually expend them on objects of small consequence even to themselves. On the contrary, if the bestower will become their treasurer and accumulate for them, and thus convert the shillings, which he might otherwise distribute, into a single benefaction of a guinea; they would rarely, probably never, break so considerable a sum for any of those trifling objects upon which the shillings separately given would all have been expended.

It will commonly add much to the benefit of such a distribution, if it should also be made at stated and expected times, so that the object of the beneficence might calculate beforehand. In this case he would, on the one hand, endeavour to supply his intermediate wants, and on the other, would regularly fix upon an important purpose for which the expected benefaction would be laid out. In this manner they will learn to overcome their own want of economy, and acquire a degree of prudence in the management of their pecuniary concerns, to which otherwise they would be strangers through life.

5. *The best mode of communicating pecuniary assistance to such sufferers, as have sufficient health and capacity, is to Employ them.*

By this I intend, that we should furnish them with such means and such directions, as may be necessary to enable them to earn so much of their subsistence, as can be brought within their reach

by their own industry. Most of the poor would choose to support themselves, if it were in their power. He, who puts it in their power, delivers them from the painful consciousness of being burdensome to others; places them in a degree of independence, which is rationally pleasant; and in many instances, enables them ultimately to earn more than a mere subsistence; and thus teaches them in the only effectual manner how to provide for themselves. In addition to all this, he brings them within the pale of character and reputation, and renders them useful to themselves and to mankind. In this particular, men of active and extensive business, are furnished by Providence with peculiar advantages for becoming important benefactors to mankind as well as to individuals.

5. *Our beneficence is often rendered to others much more usefully by Personal Exertions in their behalf, than by mere contribution of money.*

There are innumerable cases of suffering, of which property cannot become the relief. Of this nature, are those of sickness, pain, sorrow, disgrace, decrepitude, friendlessness, the necessity of countenance, a broken heart, and all that variety of anguish of spirit which respects our salvation. In all these, and in many other cases, the kindness needed is not pecuniary bounty, but those good offices which are suited to the nature of the suffering. Very many persons, perhaps almost all those who are in easy circumstances, much more willingly contribute their property than their personal services. To give a small sum of money, is often considered as an easy piece of self-denial; when a personal effort is regarded as a serious sacrifice.

But it is to no purpose to contribute money for the relief of distress, where we know that it will not produce the relief. The duty demanded by our circumstances, the benefit needed by those whom we profess to befriend, is always that, of course, which will effectuate relief for the calamity actually endured. Every thing else, here, is comparatively of no value.

Let it also be remembered, that the benefit communicated in these cases, by our good offices, is real, while that intended, by our bounty, is imaginary; and that, in proportion to the self-denial which our kindness may demand, will be the amiableness and the worth of the disposition by which it is rendered. Even in cases where the relief of suffering is to be accomplished by pecuniary bounty, it will often be true that he, who in his own person solicits contributions, is a greater benefactor than any of those who furnish them, even without supposing him to contribute at all.

But in a great multitude of cases, some of which have been specified, property cannot be the means of relief. Property cannot watch with the sick, nor administer remedies for ther diseases, nor heal a wounded spirit, nor comfort mourners, nor restore resolution to the discouraged, nor withdraw a wanderer from vice and ruin, nor place his feet in the way of life. If we are really charitable, we

shall endeavour to do all these and the like kind offices. If we are unwilling to do them, it is because we are destitute of charity.

7. *We are bound to make this communication of beneficence a part of our System of life.*

When once it is determined by us, that the performance of this duty is one great end for which we live, and that a considerable part of our time, our labours, and our substance, is to be employed in this manner, much of our native reluctance to it may be regarded as being overcome. Whatever we do habitually, however irksome it may be at first, will in the end be willingly done. At first we think of little beside the difficulties, which will attend the performance. As we proceed, the employment itself gradually becomes pleasant; and we also realize more and more the various pleasures by which it is attended. At the same time, whenever any conduct becomes part of our system of action, as we regularly expect to adopt it, we make a regular and constant preparation for the performance. In the present case, for example, when it has become an habitual object to bestow upon the poor pecuniary bounty; we shall so regulate our expenses as continually to be in possession of the means of this bounty, and shall not be unprovided, when the occasions for charity occur. If personal assistance is the beneficence demanded; we shall so adjust our business, as to be able, without serious inconvenience, to perform the kind offices which this duty may require. Universally, of whatever nature the good to be done may be, we shall in this case be prepared to do it, and that as a part of the business of life.

On the contrary, he who performs acts of charity only in a desultory and occasional manner, will find himself unready to fulfil such of its demands as he will acknowledge to be real and obligatory, will halt between the duty and the sacrifice which it will cost, and will often persuade himself in opposition to the first dictates of his conscience, that in the existing case he may be lawfully excused.

In addition to what has been said, it ought to be diligently remembered, that we are not made for ourselves, that we were made for the glory of our Creator and the good of our fellow-creatures, and that it is our supreme interest, as well as our indispensable duty, to fulfil this exalted end of our being. We are ever to keep before our eyes, that it is always unnecessary and usually undesirable for us to be rich; that when in the course of honest industry we become rich, we are peculiarly obligated to *do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;* and that, in this manner, we shall lay up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come. Still further, we are bound to realize that our property belongs to God, that to us it is a mere gift of his bounty, that there is no good in it, unless we gratefully rejoice in the loving-kindness of the Giver, and do good in our life, and that then only we are entitled to enjoy the good of all our la-

bour. Finally, we are to realize that God is especially glorified when good is done to mankind.

If these interesting considerations are continually kept in view and brought home to the heart, it seems hardly possible that we should not be well prepared to perform all those actions, which are included under the comprehensive name of Charity.

IV. *Among the numerous motives to the performance of this duty, I shall select the following.*

1. *We shall preserve ourselves from the deplorable passion of avarice.*

Cast back your eyes for a moment on the exhibition made of this attribute in the preceding discourse, and tell me, Which of you is willing to subject himself to the miserable bondage of its domination? Which of you is willing to sustain the character, which of you to perform the actions, which to receive the reward? Can any character be more unfit for a rational being, more odious or more contemptible in itself, or, in proportion to its means, more mischievous to mankind? How emphatically true is it, that *the love of money is the root of all evil;* that those who love it, *fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition;* that they are seduced from the faith, and pierce themselves through, or, as in the original, *all around*, with many sorrows! Let every one of you who is a child of God, let every one of you who intends to become a child of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, and love.

But nothing seems better fitted to prevent, or to root out, this wretched passion, than an habitual performance of the duties of charity. He, who accustoms himself to give freely and to act kindly to others, especially to the poor and suffering, from whom he can rationally hope for nothing again, can scarcely fail in the end of being willing to give, and to give liberally. For a truly charitable man to be covetous, is impossible.

Let me add, that in this manner also we shall be secured from the imputation of avarice. Nothing will sooner or more perfectly destroy a good name, than this imputation, nothing more certainly awaken the hatred and the scorn of our fellow-men, nothing more certainly preclude us from any rational or desirable influence over them.

2. *By a faithful performance of these duties, we shall secure to ourselves the Esteem of our fellow-men.*

A good name, says Solomon, *is better than great riches.* Among all the things which are done by man, nothing more certainly assures us of the best reputation, than a regular and cheerful performance of charitable offices. Not only do the wise and good, but men of all inferior descriptions, also, readily acknowledge the worth of beneficence, peculiarly when administered to such as are in distress. Excellence in other forms is often doubted, denied,

disrelished, and calumniated. In this, it seems always to be respected. The character acknowledged is not merely good: it is the best. The hardest heart acknowledges its worth; and the most niggardly tongue vibrates in its praise. How often, when the eye is wandering over published accounts, even fictitious ones, of beneficence administered to the poor and friendless, does the tear of tenderness and sympathy start, and the bosom warm with pleasure at this display of evangelical excellence! Whose voice does not delight to sound the praises of Howard; and how little do nobles, heroes, and princes appear at his side!

In the possession of such a character, we of course acquire a happy influence over our fellow-men; and this influence is the chief means of our usefulness. An individual acting alone can do little towards promoting the well-being of his fellow-men; while the same individual, by means of extensive influence, may become an important public blessing. Although, therefore, reputation, considered merely as a gratification of our pride, is of little consequence; its value, as the means of usefulness, is inestimable. In this view, *a good name is* indeed *rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving-favour than silver and gold.*

3. *In the performance of these duties, we insure to ourselves the approbation of our own Consciences.*

This is always the consequence of performing our duty; yet there are some duties, from which it springs in a peculiar degree. Among these, the administration of charity obviously holds a high station. As there is something eminently lovely in beneficence to the eyes of those who look on, so it is seen to be thus lovely by the eye of the benefactor. It is a glorious character of God that he is good, that he doeth good, and that his tender mercies are over all his works. This character we never so directly and peculiarly resemble, as when we do good with the spirit of the Gospel. Of this resemblance, and the beauty of it, the mind is conscious of course; and surveying the Divine image instamped upon itself, beholds its lustre and loveliness with a delight which is independent, serene, and incomparably superior to every thing which the world is able to give or to take away.

4. *It secures the approbation of God.*

Concerning this truth there can be no debate. Multitudes indeed suppose nothing else to be necessary for this purpose; and seem willing to consider it as supplying all deficiencies of repentance, faith, and love to God, even when their beneficence is that of the hands, and not that of the heart. This undoubtedly is an error, and a very dangerous one. Still it is certain, that Evangelical beneficence will secure to us the Divine approbation; for he, in whom it is found, will certainly possess every other evangelical attribute. In an eminent degree, is it obedience to very numerous commands of the Gospel; and, in a degree no less eminent, is it an object of Scriptural promises. *Blessed is he that considereth the*

poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble; the Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth: the Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing. He hath dispersed; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever.

5. *It is a striking resemblance to the character of the Redeemer.*

Jesus Christ, saith St. Peter, *a man who went about doing good.* How exact a description is this of our Saviour's life! To pass by the divine doctrines which he taught, how entirely were all his miracles directed to this single end! He healed the sick; he fed the hungry; he comforted the sorrowful; cleansed the leprous, cast out devils, and restored soundness to the lame, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead: and still more wonderful were his sufferings. All the contradiction which he endured from sinners, all the agonies of the garden and the cross, and all the humiliation of the grave, he endured solely for the purpose of rescuing wretched apostates, condemned and ruined, from final perdition. How lovely, how glorious a character! *Mine elect*, saith God the Father, *in whom my soul delighteth; my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* What Angel would not delight to make such a character his pattern! What Christian would not follow his example!

6. *It will secure a Divine reward.*

It is a most remarkable fact, that, in our Saviour's account of his administrations at the final day, he has founded his approbation of good men and their everlasting reward, upon their performance of the duties of charity. *Come, ye blessed of my Father*, will the Judge of the quick and the dead say to them on his right hand, *inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in; naked, and clothed thee; or when saw we thee sick, and in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

On the other hand, the cause, expressly assigned for the condemnation of the wicked at the same awful day, is their omission of these very duties. How delightful, then, will it be, to go from this world with a consciousness that the duties of charity have been all performed by ourselves! How melancholy, how dreadful, to stand before the Judge with a conviction that they have all been neglected!

SERMON CXXXI.

TENTH COMMANDMENT.—AVARICE

1 TIMOTHY vi. 9, 10.—*They, that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For, the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

IN the two preceding discourses, I examined the Nature, and Benefits of *Contentment;* the immediate object of Injunction in the Tenth Command: and of *Charity;* a duty which it obviously implies. The subject, which next offers itself to consideration, is *the Covetousness*, which is the immediate object of Prohibition in this precept. This I shall discuss under the two general heads of *Avarice* and *Ambition.*

The former of these shall occupy the present discourse.

The spirit of Covetousness extends, indeed, both its views, and desires, to the objects of Sensuality, as well as to Wealth, and Distinction. But, beside that these are not commonly considered as the proper objects of covetousness, I have already discoursed so extensively concerning several sensual gratifications, as to render it unnecessary again to bring them into a particular examination.

In the present discussion, it is my design to consider,

I. *The Folly;*

II. *The Guilt;* and,

III. *The Mischiefs; of Avarice.*

All these subjects are directly mentioned in the Text. Of those, who *will be rich*, it is said, that they *fall into many foolish lusts.* These lusts are also said to be *hurtful*, and to *drown men in destruction and perdition.* It is further said, that *the love of money is the root of all evil. Some*, who had *coveted after it*, in, or before, the days of *St. Paul*, he declares, *erred*, or were seduced, *from the faith; and pierced themselves through;* περιεπειραν, *pierced themselves all around; with many sorrows.* Here, we find the Folly, Guilt, and Mischiefs, of Avarice asserted in the strongest, as well as the most explicit, terms. What is thus testified by *St. Paul*, the common sense of mankind has, in every age and country, attested in the most ample manner. All nations, wherever wealth has existed, have declared Covetousness to be eminently *foolish, sinful, and mischievous.* A stronger specimen of this testimony can

hardly be given, than in the appropriation of the name, *Miser, a wretch*, to the avaricious man.

The proofs, which I shall give, at the present time, of the *Folly of Avarice*, are the following.

1. *The pursuits of the Avaricious Man are attended by many unnecessary anxieties, labours, and distresses.*

The mind of an avaricious man is always the seat of eager desire. So peculiarly is this the fact, that the words *Covetous* and *Covetousness*, although originally signifying any inordinate desire, denote in common usage, when unqualified by other phraseology, *the inordinate desire of wealth;* and are equivalent to the words *Avaricious* and *Avarice*. This fact, more strongly than any reasoning could, proves, that the love of riches is, usually, in an eminent degree, inordinate. But, whenever our desires sustain this character, the mind becomes proportionally *anxious*. Our attainment of the coveted object is, in most cases, necessarily uncertain. Between the fear of losing, and the hope of acquiring, it, the mind is necessarily suspended. As these desires are *continually* exerted, the suspense becomes, of course, continual also. A state of suspense is always a state of anxiety. Here, the anxiety is regularly great, and distressing; because the desires are incessant, eager, and sufficiently strong to control all the powers of the mind.

But this anxiety is unnecessarily suffered. All the prudence and industry, which can be lawfully exerted for the acquisition of wealth, may be employed, and all the property, which can be lawfully acquired, may be gained, without the exercise of a single avaricious feeling, and without the sufferance of a single avaricious anxiety. The contented man often becomes rich, to every desirable degree, amid the full possession of serenity, peace, and self-approbation.

Nor are the *Labours* of the avaricious man of a less unfortunate nature. His mind is continually strained with effort. The strength of his desires, goads him into an unceasing course of contrivances to gratify them. His thirst for property drives him to an incessant formation of plans, by which he hopes to acquire it. The fear of lessening what he has acquired, hurries him into an endless, and wearisome train of exertions, to secure himself from losses. Thus, a course of mental toil is voluntarily assumed by him, resembling, not the independent labours of a freeman, but the drudgery of a slave. The mind of an old miser is thus in a continual state of travail; and struggles through life under the pressure of an iron bondage.

A mind, hurried by eager schemes of effort, is always a tyrant to the body. Accordingly, the bodily labours of the miser commence before the dawn; worry him through the day; and scarcely permit him to lie down at night. A mere dray-horse, he is destined to a course of incessant toil. The only changes of life to him

are from dragging loads, to bearing burdens; and like those of the dray-horse, they are all borne, and dragged, for the use of others.

To the pains, springing hourly from this unintermitted toil, are added the daily reproaches of conscience; the sufferings of disease, and accident, to which such a life is peculiarly exposed; the contempt of those around him; the denial of their pity to his sufferings; and their universal joy in his mortification.

2. *The wishes of the avaricious man are followed by innumerable Disappointments.*

The property, which he covets, he often fails to acquire. His plans, although formed with his utmost sagacity, and with extreme care, are not unfrequently frustrated. His debtors become bankrupt. His hard bargains are avoided. His deeds, or other obligations, are defective. His agents are often unskilful; often unfaithful; and, while they are employed merely because they will serve him at a cheap rate, frequently make their service distressingly expensive. Storms, also, will blow, in spite of his wishes. Shelves will spread; and rocks will stand in the way of *his* ships, as well as in the way of others. The gain, which he looks for, will, often, only appear to excite his most anxious desires, and mock him with the most painful disappointment.

Scarcely less is he wounded, when the gain in view is partially acquired. The advantage of a bargain, the amount of a crop, or the profits of a voyage, are less than his expectations have promised. As his calculations are all set high, and made by the hand of ardent desire; they, of course, overrun his success. But moderate success frustrates immoderate desire little less than absolute disappointment.

Should we even suppose his success to equal his expectations; he will be still disappointed. He covets wealth, for the good, which he supposes it will confer. This good, is not the supply of his wants, the communication of conveniences, or the ministration of luxuries. Luxuries and conveniences, he has not a wish to enjoy; and his wants might be supplied by a tenth, a twentieth, or even a hundredth, part of what he possesses. Personal importance, influence, and distinction, constitute, eminently, the good, which the miser expects from his gains. But this object he often fails to accomplish; and, in the measure which he expects, always. Some of those around him will, in spite of both his wishes, and labours, be richer than himself. Others will possess superior understanding: and others superior excellence. Some, or all, of these will acquire more reputation, weight, or influence, than himself. Thus he is compelled to see men, who are his rivals, whom he hates, or whom he either dreads as being more, or despises as being less, rich than himself, raised above him in the public estimation: while his own mind is left to the ranklings

of envy, and the miseries of disappointment. At the same time, he is frequently stung by the severities of well-founded censure, lashed by the hand of scorn, and set up as a mark for the shafts of derision. He is also without friends; without commiseration; without esteem. He, who would gain esteem, must deserve it. He, who would *have friends, must show himself friendly.* He, who would find commiseration, must commiserate others.

3. *The Good, which the avaricious man actually gains, is Uncertain.*

Wealth is the only good, which he seeks. If this, then, is lost; he loses his all. Nothing can be more unwise, than to center all our views, wishes, and labours, in uncertain good. But the good of the miser is eminently uncertain. No truth is more attested by the experience of man, than that *riches make to themselves wings as an eagle, and fly away towards heaven.* The dangers, to which wealth is exposed, are innumerable. The schemes of its possessor, in spite of all human sagacity, will at times prove abortive. Flaws will, at times, be found in the written securities, with which he attempts to guard his gains. The formation of them will often be committed to unskilful, because they are cheap, hands. Incompetent, and unfaithful, persons will, at times, be trusted, because they offer peculiarly advantageous terms. Houses, notes, bonds, and deeds will, at times, be consumed by fire. Crops will fail. Cattle will die. Ships will be captured, or providentially lost. The owner and his family will be sick. Debtors will abscond, or become bankrupt; and swindlers will run away with loans, which, in spite of avaricious prudence, they have obtained. In every case of such a nature, the miser's regrets are throes; his disappointments are agonies. The instinctive language of his heart is, *Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more?*

But Avarice often amasses wealth for its heirs. *Solomon hated all the labour,* which he had undergone, to acquire riches, because he should leave them *to the man who should come after him;* and knew not *whether he would be a wise man, or a fool.* This uncertainty attends every man, who amasses wealth. His destined heir, or heirs, may be wise, and prudent; inclined to such expenses only, as are useful; and prepared to preserve their inheritance, undiminished, for those who shall come after them. But they may die before they receive their patrimony; and leave it to the possession of prodigals; to men, who will expend it for purposes, which the original owner most abhorred; and in a manner so rapid and wanton, as would, if he were living, scarcely leave him the possession of his reason. The intention of all men, who lay up property for their children, is unquestionably to do them good. How often is this intention defeated! The property accumulated is designed to make them rich. How of-

ten is it the very means of making them poor! It is bequeathed, to make them happy. How often is it the cause of their ruin! How often is a splendid inheritance the source of idleness, profusion, negligence, gambling, rash adventure, and speedy beggary! To harass one's self through life, merely to promote these miserable ends, is certainly, if any thing is, *vanity and vexation of spirit.*

4. *The avaricious man incapacitates himself to enjoy the very good which he seeks.*

In order to enjoy any kind of good, it is indispensable, that we should experience some degree of contentment; at least, during the period of enjoyment. *But he, that loveth silver, will never be satisfied with silver; nor he, that loveth abundance, with increase.* The desire of gain enlarges faster, than the most successful and romantic acquisitions; and, were pounds to be accumulated as rapidly, as the most favoured children of fortune multiply pence; the eager mind would still overleap the limits of its possessions, and demand new additions to its wealth with accelerated avidity. As these desires increase; the fear, the reluctance, to enjoy what is accumulated, are proportionally increased. The miser, instead of furnishing himself with more gratifications, and enjoying them more highly, as his means of indulgence are increased, lessens them in number and degree; and tastes them with a more stinted, parsimonious relish. His habitation, his dress, his food, his equipage, all become more decayed, mean, and miserable, continually; because he feels less and less able to afford, first conveniences, then comforts, and then necessaries. *Although he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth; yet God giveth him the power to eat thereof.* A rich miser, who lives like a beggar, is only a beggar, dreaming that he is rich.

II. *The Guilt of Avarice may be illustrated in the following manner.*

1. *The disposition is in itself grossly sinful.*

This truth the Scriptures have exhibited with peculiar force. *Covetousness*, saith *St. Paul, is Idolatry.* Every person who has read his Bible, knows that idolatry is marked in the Scriptures as pre-eminent sin; as peculiarly *the abominable thing*, which God says, *My soul hates.* Its enormity I have illustrated in a former discourse. It will, therefore, be unnecessary to expatiate upon it here. I shall only observe, as we are taught by *St. Paul*, that *no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God.*

Common sense has long since pronounced the avaricious man to be an idolater, in the adage, proverbially used to describe his character; that he "*makes gold his god.*" Plainly, he prefers wealth to every other object; and consecrates his heart, his tal-

ents, and his time, to the single purpose of becoming rich. To this object he evidently postpones the real God; and neither renders to him, nor, while avarice predominates, can render, his affections, or his services. With such *love of the world*, the *love of the Father* cannot be united. But how sordid, how shameful, how sinful, is it thus to *worship* and *serve* a contemptible *creature* more than the *Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.*

By this disposition he, in whom it dwells, is unfitted for all his duty to God. Our duty to God is performed, if performed at all, from that supreme love to him, which is enjoined in the first, and greatest, command of the Moral Law. But the heart of the avaricious man cannot thus love God, because he renders this love to the world. He cannot worship God, because he worships gold. He cannot serve God, because he serves Mammon. Thus, his heart is alienated from his Maker; and his life employed in a continual and gross impiety.

2. *Avarice speedily destroys the tenderness, both of the Heart, and of the Conscience.*

To be without natural affection is, in the estimation of the Scriptures, as well as that of common sense, to be eminently and hopelessly sinful. But nothing sooner hardens the native feelings of the heart, than the love of riches. Open to *them*, the soul is sealed up to every thing else; and loves nothing in comparison with them. Soon, and easily, it becomes callous to all the objects of tenderness, and endearment; forgets the neighbour, the poor, and the distressed; and neglects even its nearest friends, and relations. To such a heart, poverty petitions, distress pleads, and nature cries in vain. Its ears are deaf; its eyes blind; and its hands closed. In vain the unhappy petitioner approaches with the hope of finding relief. Instead of meeting with the tear of sympathy, and the gentle voice of compassion, he is driven from the gate by the insults of a slave, and the growl of a mastiff.

With tenderness of feeling, vanishes, also, *tenderness of conscience*: that inestimable blessing to man: the indispensable means of piety, and salvation. The continual increase of the appetite for wealth, continually overcomes its remonstrances, and gradually diminishes its power. Conscience, often vanquished, is vanquished with ease. Avarice accomplishes this defeat every day, and every hour. Soon, therefore, its voice, always disregarded, ceases to be heard. Then Religion and duty plead with as little success, as friendship and suffering pleaded before. All the motives to repentance, faith, and obedience, lose their power; and might with equal efficacy be addressed to blocks and stones.

To the miser, nothing is of any value but wealth. But wealth, Conscience cannot proffer; the Scriptures do not insure; God does not promise. Therefore Conscience, the Scriptures, and God, are of no value to him. To riches, to bargains, to loans, to amass-

ing, to preserving, he is alive. To reformation, to piety, to salvation, he is dead.

The life of the avaricious man is an unceasing course of Injustice.

It is an unceasing course of *Fraud*. Few such men fail of being guilty of open dishonesty: the natural and almost necessary consequence of a covetous disposition. Should we suppose him to escape this iniquity, and, fixing his standard of morality as high as any avaricious man knows how to fix it, to make the law of the land his rule of righteousness; he will still live *a life* of fraud. His only scheme of action is, uniformly, to get as much, as that law will permit: and it will permit, because it cannot prevent, frauds innumerable. Every hard bargain, as I have formerly observed, is a fraud: and the bargains of this man, unless his weakness forbids, or Providence prevents, are all hard. But his life is spent in making such bargains; and is therefore spent in fraud.

It is, also, an unceasing course of *oppression*. The bargains, which I have already specified, are not fraudulent only; they are cruel. They are made, in innumerable instances, with the poor and suffering; and fill his coffers out of the pittance of want, and the gleanings of the widow and the fatherless. With an iron hand, he grasps the earnings of the necessitous; and *snatches, and devours, on the right hand, and on the left.*

In this oppression, *his own family take their full share.* His coffers, indeed, are rich. But himself and his family are poor. Often are they denied even the comforts of life; and, always, that education, and those enjoyments, which wealth is destined to supply. Their food is mean and stinted. Their clothes are the garb of poverty. The education, which they receive, is such, as forms a menial character; and fits them only for a menial condition. Their comforts are measured out to them, not in streams, but in solitary drops. When they are settled in life; the means of business and enjoyment are supplied to them with so parsimonious a hand, as to cut them off from every useful plan, and every comfortable expectation. If hope at any time shines upon them; it shines, only to be overcast. By their parent, they are continually mocked with the cup of *Tantalus;* which they are permitted, indeed, to touch, but not to taste. When he leaves the world, and is compelled to impart his possessions to them; they find themselves, by a stinted education, and shrivelled habits, rendered wholly unable either to enjoy their wealth themselves, or make it useful to others.

4. *The Covetous man is almost of course a Liar.*

The great design of the avaricious man, which fills his heart, spreads through his life, and controls all his conduct, is to get as much as he can; at least, so far as it can be done legally, and safely. This is the utmost point of honesty, ever aimed at by an

avaricious man. If this be attained; such a man always regards himself as being really honest. But in this he is wonderfully deceived. His favourite principle conducts him, regularly, to unceasing fraud; and regularly issues in a course of lying. As it is his aim always to sell for more, and buy for less, than justice will permit; he of course represents the value of his own commodities to be greater, and that of his neighbour's to be less, than the truth. As he spends most of his life in buying and selling, or in forming schemes to buy and sell, in this manner; he employs no small part of it either in actual, or intentional, lying. To compass the same object also, he is equally tempted to misrepresent his own circumstances; the state of the markets; the quality and quantity, the soundness, weight, and measure, of the commodities, which he sells; and, so far as may be, of those which he buys. Thus the horse, the house, or the land, which he is about to buy, is, according to his own account, poor, defective, and of little value. But as soon he chooses to sell it, it has, according to his own account, also, wonderfully changed its nature; and become excellent, free from every defect, and of very superior value. Yet, with this chain of falsehoods always hanging about his neck, the miserable wretch is frequently so blind, as not to mistrust that he is a liar.

5. *All these, and all other, sins of the avaricious man, speedily become gross and rank Habits.*

I know of no disposition, which sooner or more effectually makes a man blind to his own character, than Avarice. The Miser rarely, if ever, mistrusts that he is a sinner. He thinks himself only a rich man. He does not dream, that he is an oppressor, a liar, and a cheat; but merely supposes himself to be prosperous, sagacious, and skilled in business. With these views he will naturally entertain no thoughts of repentance; and no suspicion, that it is necessary for him. His conscience, it is to be remembered, has, in the mean time, lost its power to remonstrate, and to alarm. His heart, also, is so entirely engrossed by schemes of accumulating wealth, or is rather so absolutely possessed by the demon of avarice, as to have neither time, nor room, for the admission of a thought concerning reformation. He is left, therefore, to the domination of this wretched appetite; and becomes fixed, and hardened, in all his sins, without a check, and without resistance. There is, probably, no more obdurate heart, than that of avarice; and no more hopeless character. Every passage to it appears to be closed up, except one; and that is opened only to gain.

III. *The Mischiefs of Avarice are innumerable.* A few of them only can be even mentioned at the present time. These I shall consider as *Personal*, *Private*, and *Public*.

Among the Personal Mischiefs of Avarice, are to be reckoned all the *Follies*, and all the *Sins* which have been already specified; so far as their influence terminates in the avaricious man himself.

They are not sins and follies only; they are mischiefs also; as indeed is every other sin and folly. As mischiefs, their combined efficacy is very great, malignant, and dreadful; such as would be deliberately encountered by no man, but a profligate; such as would make a considerate man tremble.

To these let me add the guilt, and misery, of *Discontentment* and *Envy*. However fast the wealth of the avaricious man may increase; to whatever size the heaps may swell; his accumulations always lag behind his wishes. Indeed, they never keep pace with what he feels to be *his due*. In his own view he has a right to be rich: and he regards the Providence of God as under a species of obligation to make him rich. To these claims, his wishes furnish the only limit: and, whenever they are not satisfied; as is always the case, unless in the moment of some distinguished success; he becomes fretful, impatient, and angry, at the dispensations of Providence. He may not, indeed, accuse God of injustice, face to face. But he murmurs at His Providence under the names of *fortune*, *chance*, *luck*, *the state of things*, and *the course of events*. Against these, and through these, against God, his complaints are loud, vehement, bitter, full of resentment, and full of impiety.

Amid the troubles derived from this source, he cannot fail, whenever he looks around him, to find some men happier, as well as more prosperous, at least in some respects, than himself. This man may be richer. That, though inferior in wealth, may possess a piece of land, a house, a servant, which, although a darling object of his covetous desires, he may be unable to obtain. A third may have more reputation. A fourth may have more influence. A fifth may be better beloved. Towards any, or all, of these, his envy may be directed with as malignant a spirit, as his murmuring against God. It is not easy to conceive of a mind more wretched, or more odious, than that, which makes itself miserable at the sight of happiness, enjoyed by others; and pines at the thought of enjoyments, which are not its own. This spirit is the vulture of *Prometheus*, preying unceasingly upon his liver; which was for ever renewed, that it might be for ever devoured.

With Envy, Discontentment, its twin-sister, perpetually dwells. The wretch, whose heart is the habitation of both, is taught, and influenced, by them to believe, that God is his enemy, because He does not administer to his covetousness; and that men are his enemies, because they enjoy the good, which God has given them. Even happiness itself, so delightful wherever it is seen, to a benevolent eye, is a source of anguish only to him, unless when locked up in his own coffers.

The grovelling and gross *taste* of the miser, is in my view also eminently pernicious. To be under the government of such a taste, is plainly to be cut off from all rich and refined enjoyment. The miser endeavours to satiate himself upon the dross of happi-

ness. But he neither discerns, nor seeks for the *fine gold.* The delicious viands proffered to intelligent and immortal minds by the beneficence of God, are lost upon a palate which can satiate itself upon garbage. The delightful emotions of contentment, gratitude, and complacency towards his Maker; the sweets of a self-approving mind; the charming fruition of tenderness and sympathy; the refined participation of social good; and the elevated satisfaction, which springs, instinctively, from the beneficent promotion of that good; can never find an entrance into the heart, all the avenues to which are barred up by the hand of Avarice. But to lose these blessings is to lose infinitely.

At the same time, *the miser wastes of course his day of Probation.* His life is wholly occupied by the pursuit of wealth. Of sin and ruin, of holiness and Heaven, he has not time even to think. His life is too short for the accomplishment of his main object. Suns, for him, rise too late; and set too soon. Too rapidly do his days succeed each other; and too early do they terminate their career. His last sickness arrests him while he is counting his gold: and death knocks at his door, while he is in the midst of a gainful bargain. Thus he is hurried, and goaded, through the journey of life, by his covetousness; and finds no opportunity to pause, and think upon the concerns of his soul; no moment, in which he can withdraw his eye from gain, and cast a look toward Heaven. *It is easier*, saith our Saviour, *for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.*

Thus it is evident, that *they, that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition;* that *the love of money is the root of all evil;* and that *such as covet after it, pierce themselves through with many sorrows.*

The Private Mischiefs of Avarice are those, which affect unhappily the interests of families, and neighbourhoods.

To these little circles, formed to be happy, and actually the scenes of the principal happiness, furnished by this world, the miser is a common nuisance. To his family he presents the miserable example of covetousness, fraud, oppression, falsehood, and impiety; and the most humiliating and distressing living picture of an abandoned worldling, forgetting his God, and forgotten by Him; worshipping gold; ever craving and devouring, but never satisfied; denying himself, and his household, the comforts of life; and imparting to them the necessaries only in crumbs and shreds; living a life of perpetual meanness and debasement; wasting the day of probation; *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath;* advancing onward to his final account without an effort, or a thought, of preparation for this tremendous event: and all this, while irresistibly endeared to them by the strong power of natural affection.

On the neighbourhood the miser inflicts the complicated, harassing, and intense evils, of continually repeated fraud and oppression. Wherever such a man plants himself, sufferings spring up all around him. To the young, the ignorant, the thoughtless, and the necessitous, he lends money at exorbitant interest, and with tenfold security. The payment he discourages, until the amount has become sufficient to enable him, with a suit, to enclose their whole possessions in his net. To the poor and suffering also, he sells, at unconscionable prices, the necessaries of life. Notes, bonds, and mortgages, given by persons of the same description, he buys at an enormous discount. Of estates, left intestate, he watchfully seeks, and with art and perseverance obtains, the Administration. When others are obliged to buy, he sells: and when others are obliged to sell, he buys. In this manner his loans are almost instantaneously doubled; and property mortgaged to him for a tenth part of its value, is swallowed up. The estates of widows and orphans melt away before his breath, as the snow beneath the April sun. The possessions of all around him move only towards his den. The farm and the house, the garden and the cottage, the herd on the one hand, and the widow's cow and ten sheep on the other, go down together into this open sepulchre. Over the miserable beings, who cannot escape his fangs, he reigns with a despotic and wolfish dominion. All around him tremble at his nod: and, should any one retain sufficient energy to question his pleasure, or dispute his control, he points his eyes to the jail, and hushes every murmur to silence, and every thought to despair.

Nor does he less injure Society, although the injury is ordinarily less observed, as being less felt, *by corrupting both his family and his neighbourhood.* His example emboldens, his skill instructs, and his success allures, those, who are witnesses of his life, to pursue the same course of villany and oppression. All the sagacious, sharpen their cunning by his practical lessons. The intrepid, become daring by his example. The greedy become ravenous by his success. Thus the spirit of Avarice is caught; its villanies are multiplied; and a poisonous coin engrafted upon every stock in the neighbourhood. His own sons, if not broken down by his hard-handed parsimony, or induced by their sufferings to detest it, and rush into the opposite extreme of profusion, become proficients in all the mysteries of fraud and oppression: not instructed, and led, only, but drilled, into the eager, shrewd, and gainful pursuit of wealth. From him they learn to undervalue all rules of morality, except the law of the land: to violate the dictates of compassion; to burst the bonds of conscience; and to regard with indifference, and contempt, the Will of God. In his house, as in a second *Newgate*, young men soon become old in villany; and with a heart prematurely hardened into stone, and

hands trained to mischief by transferred experience, are turned loose to prey upon the vitals of Society.

The *Public Mischiefs* of Avarice are not less numerous; and are of incomprehensible magnitude. It was one of the glorious characteristics of the men, recommended by *Jethro* to *Moses* to fill the stations of Rulers, that *they hated covetousness:* a characteristic indispensable to him, who would *rule justly*, and be a *minister of God for good to his people.* When Avarice ascends the chair of state, mingles with the councils of princes, seats herself on the bench of justice, or takes her place in the chamber of legislation; nay, when she takes possession of subordinate departments, particularly of those, which are financial, in the administration of government; her views become extended, and her ravages terrible. The man, over whom she has established her dominion, sees, even in the humblest of these stations, prospects of acquiring wealth opening suddenly upon him, of which he before never formed a conception. In the mysterious collection of revenues, the mazy management of taxes, the undefined claims for perquisites, the opportunities of soliciting and receiving customary bribes, and in the boundless gulf of naval and military contracts, he beholds new means, and new motives, for the exercise of all his talents, fraud and rapacity, and for the speedy acquisition of opulence, crowding upon him at once. The alluring scene he surveys with the same spirit with which a vulture eyes the field of blood. Every thing, on which he can fasten his talons, here becomes his prey. The public he cheats without compunction: individuals he oppresses without pity. There is sufficient wealth in the world to supply all its inhabitants with comfort. But when some become suddenly, and enormously, rich, multitudes must sink into the lowest depths of poverty. To enable a single farmer of revenues, or a single contractor, to lodge in a palace, to riot at the table of luxury, and to roll on wheels of splendour, thousands have sweat blood, and wrung their hands in agony. But what is all this to him? He is rich; whoever else may be poor. He is fed; whoever else may starve. The frauds and ravages of public agents, which find palliation, countenance, and excuse, from the fact, that they have become customary, constitute no small part of that oppression, which has awakened the groans and cries of the human race, from the days of *Nimrod* to the present hour.

But Avarice is not confined to subordinate agents. Often it ascends the throne, and grasps the sceptre. The evils, of which it is the parent in this situation, are fully proportioned to its power; and outrun the most excursive wanderings of imagination. A large part of the miseries, entailed on mankind by oppressive taxes at home, and ruinous wars abroad, are created by the lust for plunder. This fiend hurried the *Spaniards* to *America;* and stung them into the perpetration of all those cruelties, which laid waste the Empires of *Mexico* and *Peru.* The same foul spirit steered

the slave-ships of *America* and *Europe* to the *African* shores; tore from their friends, children, and parents, ten millions of the unoffending natives; transported them, in chains, across the *Atlantic;* and hurried them to the grave by oppressive toil, torture, and death. Every where, and in every age, she has wasted the happiness, wrung the heart, and poured out the blood, of man. Relentless as death, and insatiable as the grave, she has continually *opened her mouth without measure; and the glory, the multitude, and the pomp* of cities, states, and empires, have descended into the abyss!

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